

**A Portrait of an Iowa Woman Superintendent:  
A Study of Attributes and Barriers for Women in Accessing the Position of  
Superintendent in Iowa**

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Drake University**

**In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education**

**By Gladys Idelle Olsen  
September 2005**

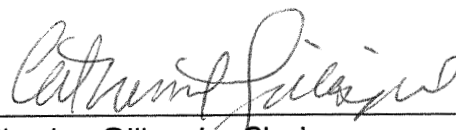
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A PORTRAIT OF AN IOWA WOMAN SUPERINTENDENT:  
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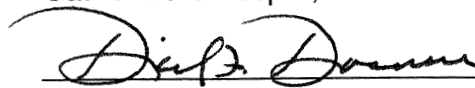
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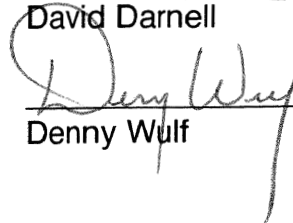
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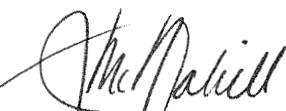
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Chair: Catherine Gillespie

The problem. 10.5% of the superintendents and 71% of teachers in Iowa are female. The problem for this study was to identify barriers that women face in accessing the superintendency and the attributes needed to overcome those barriers, in order to answer the question: What does it take to for a woman to become a superintendent in Iowa?

Procedure. A survey was electronically mailed to all 37 2003-2004 Iowa female superintendents, with 37 randomly selected male superintendents from an Iowa Department of Education list. The response rate to this survey was 97.2% for males and 75.6% for females. Frequency response tables and data analysis, primarily the Wilcoxon/Mann-Whitney/U Test, were used to determine significant differences between the groups. Qualitative interviews were conducted with three female superintendents and representatives of the three major superintendent search firms in the state. Qualitative data were analyzed using iterations of the constant comparative method. Stories were represented using characteristics of the testimonio genre.

Findings. Quantitative: Significant differences included: Female superintendents accessed the superintendency at older ages than males, were less likely to be married, were more likely to be employed in schools of less than 3,000 students, and 55% earned less than the average superintendent salary for the state. Approximately 26% of female superintendents felt they received low support from recruiters. Qualitative: Search consultants and school board presidents were the gatekeepers in the selection process. Mentors and networking were critical to women's career advancement. Women must exhibit perseverance, business acumen, and "grit" in order to access a superintendency. Overt and covert discrimination against women still exists which inhibits the advancement of more women to positions of school leadership. The field of education demonstrated a hegemonic and androcentric system which does not favor women in leadership.

Recommendations. (1) The disparity between the number of females certified in Iowa and those practicing as superintendents. (2) Perceptions of school boards, especially school board presidents about hiring women as superintendents. (3) Female superintendents' career stories, particularly about how they accessed the superintendency. (4) Occurrences of bullying and mobbing in school administration.

## Dedication

This work is the result of all those “empty chairs at empty tables”, about whom Marius sings in *Les Miz*. Those chairs are filled with teachers who did their best for a pittance of what they were worth. Many are no longer with us, but so long as we work to instill the passion for learning in others their legacy grows.

I wish to dedicate this work to the following important people in my life:

- First and foremost to my parents, Alfred and Opal Yeisley Olsen, who always encouraged and inspired me to be more and do more. Their reverence for education and their unswerving support did not end with their lives on Earth. My mother’s insatiable desire to read good literature and my father’s love of debating the issues gave me intellectual longing and joy. They gave me a great sense of being loved;
- To my son, Drew, who has taught me much, and has remained steadfast through the “best of times and the worst of times”. His unflinching spirit challenges me. From him I have developed curiosity, craziness, a deeper sense of justice, and unconditional love;
- to those friends and relatives who are all family. There is no difference between them: *hermanas and hermanos, todos*;
- to Dr. William C. Jacobson and the Scottish Rite Masons of Iowa for their encouragement and financial support of this work;
- to those educators and students with whom I have had the honor of working. Their insights and wisdom have kept me humble;
- to those professionals whom I surveyed, interviewed and who were willing to share their stories for this study. They have taught me truth, courage, perseverance and hope;
- to Dr. Catherine Gillespie, my advisor, for her enduring patience and gentle mentoring and to my committee members, Dr. David Darnell and Dr. Denny Wulf;
- and finally, to Kenan Virlee--*Tavarish*, consummate teacher. His tough encouragement and challenge made a difference. My love exceeds a contract. Cherubini lives.

## **Table of Contents**

<b>Chapter</b>		<b>Page</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
	Statement of the Problem	2
	Purpose of the Study	3
	Theoretical Basis	4
	Research Questions	5
	Methodology	6
	Significance of the Study	8
	Summary	10
<b>2.</b>	<b>REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE</b>	<b>12</b>
	Theoretical Framework	15
	Description of the Present Situation	19
	Historical Overview	23
	Trends of Women in the Educational Field	25
	Research and Gender Bias	29
	Business Acumen	37
	Legislative Initiatives	38
	Cultural and Psychosocial Obstacles	46
	Institutional Obstacles/The Glass Ceiling	68

	Assessing the Superintendency	84
	School Boards and the Selection Process	93
	Male and Female Career Perceptions and Leadership Styles	114
	Summary of the Findings of the Review of the Literature	124
3.	METHODOLOGY	129
	Overview	129
	Feminist Perspective	130
	Constructivist Perspective	130
	Overview of the Research Design	131
	Combining Quantitative and Qualitative Procedures	132
	Quantitative Design	134
	Quantitative Procedures	136
	Adjustment of the Survey Instrument	137
	Population	145
	Management of Data	149
	Analysis of Data	150
	Qualitative Design	151
	Informants	155
	Qualitative Procedures	155
	Interviews, Questions and Data Collection	158

Management of Data	165
Trustworthiness	166
Limitations and Strengths	167
Summary	170
4. ANALYSIS OF THE DATA	172
Introduction	172
Research Questions	180
Portrait of a Female Iowa Superintendent	236
5. SUMMARY OF RESULTS, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	239
Barriers	247
Attributes	250
Discussion	252
Conclusions	253
Implications for Practice	257
Recommendations for Future Research	258
Strengths and Limitations in Retrospect	260
Summary	261
REFERENCES	263
Appendixes	300
A. Number of Female Superintendents by Size of District	300

B. Female Superintendents to in Iowa 2004 vs 2005	301
C. Full-Time Female Superintendents in Public Schools	302
D. Number of Iowa Female Superintendents Disaggregated by AEA District	303
E. Iowa Boards of Education: Gender Composition	304
F. Indiana Survey Instrument	305
G. Survey Instrument	312
H. Cover Letter	319
I. Consent Form	320
J. Consultant Interview Protocol	322
K. Constant Comparison Matrix: Search Consultants	323
L. Constant Comparison Matrix: Superintendents	325

## Tables

Table	Page
1. $H_0$ 1 –Age at time of first superintendency for males and females in Iowa	182
2. $H_0$ 1 – t-test for age at time of first superintendency for males and females in Iowa	183
3. $H_0$ 2--Marital status of male and female superintendents in Iowa	184
4. $H_0$ 2-- $\chi^2$ test for marital status of male and female superintendents in Iowa	184
5. $H_0$ 3 – Difference in educational level of Iowa superintendents by gender	186
6. $H_0$ 3—Mann Whitney/U test by gender of marital status of Iowa superintendents	186
7. $H_0$ 4— Frequency results of male and female superintendents in Iowa by district population	187
8. $H_0$ 4—Mann Whitney/U test for male and female superintendents by district population in Iowa	187
9. $H_{0.5}$ —Frequency results of differences in salary for male and female superintendents in Iowa	188

10. $H_o$ 5— Mann Whitney/U test for differences	
in salary for male and female superintendents in	
Iowa	189
11. $H_o$ 6— Frequency of responses to number of	
administrative positions held by males and females	
prior to accessing a superintendency	190
12. $H_o$ 6— Mann Whitney/U test for difference	
in professional experience between male and female	
superintendents in Iowa	190
13. $H_o$ 7— Frequency results comparing males and	
females in length of time to access a superintendency	
in Iowa	192
14. $H_o$ 7 —/Mann Whitney/U test for length of	
time to access a superintendency for males and	
females in Iowa	193
15. $H_o$ 8— Frequency results of recruiter support for	
male and female superintendents in Iowa	194
16. $H_o$ 8— Mann Whitney/U test for recruiter	
support comparing male and female superintendents	
in Iowa	197



17.  $H_{o9}$ —Frequency results comparing family and  
friend's support for male and female superintendents  
in Iowa 198
18.  $H_{o9}$ —Mann Whitney/U test comparing  
family and friends' support for male and female  
superintendents in Iowa 199
19.  $H_{o10}$ —Frequency results comparing level of network  
support for male and female superintendents in Iowa 200
20.  $H_{o10}$ —Mann Whitney/U test for level of  
network support comparing male and female  
superintendents in Iowa 200
21.  $H_{o11}$ —Frequency results comparing levels of  
mentoring between male and female superintendents  
in Iowa 202
22.  $H_{o11}$ —Mann Whitney/U test for comparing  
mentor support for male and female superintendents  
in Iowa 203
23.  $H_{o12}$ —Frequency results comparing levels of self  
confidence between male and female superintendents  
in Iowa 204

24. $H_o$ 12— Mann Whitney/U test for comparing level of self confidence between male and female superintendents in Iowa	205
25. $H_o$ 13—Frequency results comparing levels of perseverance between male and female superintendents in Iowa	206
26. $H_o$ 13 – Mann Whitney/U test for comparing level of perseverance between male and female superintendents in Iowa	207
27. $H_o$ 14—Frequency results comparing amount of job experience leading up to the superintendency between male and female superintendents in Iowa	209
28. $H_o$ 14 – Mann Whitney/U test for comparing males and females in the amount of job experience leading up to a superintendency in Iowa	210
29. $H_o$ 15—Frequency results comparing the perceived levels of compatibility with the school board between male and female superintendents in Iowa	210
30. $H_o$ 15 – Mann Whitney/U test comparing the perceived levels of compatibility with the school board between male and female superintendents in Iowa	211

31.  $H_o 16$ —Frequency results comparing the considered importance of managerial skills between male and female superintendents in Iowa 214
32.  $H_o 16$ --Mann Whitney/U test comparing the considered importance of managerial skills between male and female superintendents in Iowa 215
33.  $H_o 17$ —Frequency results comparing the considered importance of leadership skills between male and female superintendents in Iowa 215
34.  $H_o 17$ —Mann Whitney/U test comparing the considered importance of leadership skills between male and female superintendents in Iowa 216
35.  $H_o 18$ —Frequency results comparing perceived importance of political savvy between male and female superintendents in Iowa 219
36.  $H_o 18$ —Mann Whitney/U test for comparing the perceived importance of political savvy between male and female superintendents in Iowa 220
37.  $H_o 19$ —Frequency results comparing perceived importance about philosophy of the profession between male and female superintendents in Iowa 220

38. $H_0$ 19—Mann Whitney/U test for comparing	
the perceived importance of professional philosophy	
between male and female superintendents in Iowa	221
39. Confidence Intervals and Levels for Survey Results	222

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Importance and Relevance of the Issue

*Committed and capable leadership for public education always has been critical. Effective leadership sets the tone and conditions for schools to serve children well, and facilitates their efforts to do so. Today, it may be more important than at any other time in history.*  
(Education Commission of the States, 2000, p. 1)

*Because of legislation and other pressures to change, many past barriers are now reappearing in more subtle guises. For women to make personal strides forward, breaking glass ceilings, climbing old walls, and dumping the baggage of the past takes concerted effort. Such powerful effort commands concentrated attention, planning and cohesiveness. The synergy of many forces is creating possibilities for a different future.* (Hill & Ragland, 1995, p.16)

The national average for women serving in the position of superintendent is 13.4% (Brunner, Grogan & Prince, 2003). The following statistics were taken from the Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of Planning, Research and Evaluation (2004), for the 2003-2004 school year. There was a slight increase in

the number of females holding superintendent positions. The percentage of female superintendents in Iowa was 10.5% of the total Iowa superintendent population. Iowa schools served over a half million students in approximately equal proportions of males and females; however, 24,254 females and 9,434 males served as their teachers. Full-time male principals outnumbered full-time female principals by an approximate ratio of 2:1. On the teacher level, men had more advanced degrees and higher salaries than did their female counterparts. At the full-time principal level, approximately 5% of the female principals had advanced degrees, however males had more job experience than their female counterparts and made, on average, slightly higher salaries.

### **Statement of the Problem**

*The United States Census Bureau has characterized the superintendency as being the most male-dominated executive position of any profession in the United States. (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2001, p. 17)*

Tallerico (2000a), Blount (1998), Brunner (1999), and Grogan (1996), major researchers in the field of educational leadership, have made an urgent call to address the disparity between the numbers of men and women serving as superintendents in the United States. That call should be echoed in Iowa because the disparity between the number of women and the number of men

serving as superintendents is even wider at our state level than at the national level. Glass et al. (2001) state their concern thus:

A growing body of research on women in school administration suggests that the characteristics of female school administrators, while different from those of men, are highly desirable qualities for leaders in educational reform initiatives. Although these findings may not apply to every individual in every school setting, they nonetheless support the notion that women bring considerable professional capital to the superintendency. (p. 17)

If the number of female superintendents continues to increase at the present rate, it will require at least another generation before students will be in a system where the gender of leadership is balanced (Blount, 1998). Why are there so few women superintendents in Iowa?

### **Purpose of the Study**

*I believe that the future of school system leadership belongs to women.* (Houston, 3/22/04 cover letter for the 2003 AASA Monograph)

The overarching question that guided this research was: What does it take to become a female superintendent in Iowa? The purpose of this mixed methodology research study was to search out the attributes of, and barriers to, women in the superintendency in Iowa. The study also sought to examine the

particular characteristics of those women who have successfully accessed the superintendency and to describe those characteristics as a means of sharing their success. The end product of this study was a composite portrait of a typical Iowa female superintendent, which will be shared widely with the field of education with the hope of providing information to those who may aspire to become superintendents.

### **Theoretical Basis**

*Feminism holds that, whatever it is to be human, women are that, too, and therefore eligible for the rights of human beings. (Baym, 1995, p. 3)*

The theoretical framework of this study is centered on the feminist-constructivist approach. A feminist perspective is an essential component in the paradigm for research on women in educational administration (Shakeshaft, 1981). "Most feminist research is openly ideological and assumes that ways of knowing are inherently culture bound and that research values permeate inquiry" (Lather, 1992, p. 91). The intent of this study is to articulate and consolidate a clearer picture of existing circumstances related to women in educational leadership and how the obstacles and barriers faced by this population have a far-reaching impact on social justice in educational leadership.

Understanding that feminism has, as a premise, a concern for both males and females, "doing gender" is defined as the social interactive processes of how



people construct and reconstruct differences (Osmond & Thorne, 1993, p. 593). The unfortunate result of "doing gender" is a polarity which marginalizes and silences women. As Osmond and Thorne (p. 593) state, "By making women's experiences visible, feminist scholarship reveals gaps and distortions in knowledge that claims to be inclusive." The extent to which women and minorities participate in administering the schools is one measure of education's real commitment to the ideal of equal opportunity for all Americans, an ideal that is far from being realized (Coursen, Mazzarella, Jeffress, & Hadderman, 1989).

This study used a constructivist approach. The constructivist approach compliments the qualitative stage of this study. This approach "recognizes that the viewer creates the data and ensuing analysis through interaction with the viewed" (Charmaz, 2000, p. 523). Charmaz further states, "constructivism aims toward interpretive understanding of subjects' meanings" (p. 510). Analysis of the in-depth interviews permitted the researcher an opportunity, through a constant comparative process, to construct meaning from the collected data that added to the field of knowledge about what it takes for a woman to become a superintendent in Iowa. These strands were collected and analyzed to create a composite portrait a female superintendent in Iowa (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

### **Research Questions**

The overarching question for this study was: What does it take to become a female superintendent in Iowa? The research was conducted in two stages

using a mixed methodology approach. To determine “what it takes” it was necessary to identify differences between male and female superintendents and to determine if those differences were the result of barriers that may have been specific to gender within the system. The quantitative study was designed to identify the differences through a series of null hypotheses, which were based on the review of the literature and a previous similar study completed in Indiana (Kowalski & Strouder, 1999). The secondary research was also guided by the previously stated overarching question. This portion of the research was qualitative in nature.

### **Methodology**

*Rather than thinking of qualitative and quantitative strategies as incompatible, they should be seen as complementary. (Malterud, 2001, p. 1)*

The initial stage of the study employed a survey questionnaire that was based on information from the review of the literature and a previous survey completed in Indiana (Kowalski & Strouder, 1999). The web-based survey was sent to all 37 female superintendents practicing in Iowa in the 2003-2004 school year along with a randomly selected commensurate number of their male counterparts with the purpose of establishing a basis of comparison in terms of demographics, professional experience, and personal characteristics. These data were analyzed using the Wilcoxon/Mann-Whitney/ U, a non-parametric variant of the t-test, to compare male and female responses. This allowed the researcher to

compare and analyze the attributes of the two groups. The data were also used as a foundation for the framework in the qualitative interviews both as a semi-structured interview protocol that was used with the search consultants and as prompts in unstructured interviews with the selected female superintendents.

The second stage of the study involved interviews with search consultants using the protocol described previously and the selection of three to four female superintendents who were interviewed in a face-to-face situation, using two open-ended questions, followed by the prompts, if needed. The open-ended questions were:

- Would you tell me about your professional life and how you became a superintendent?
- What does it take to be a female superintendent in Iowa?

Interviews were audio taped and transcribed verbatim. Field notes were also audio taped and transcribed. Representatives from the top three superintendent recruiting firms in Iowa, as determined by the Iowa Association of School Boards, were interviewed using an interview protocol based on data from the survey questionnaire as well as the review of the literature. To ensure trustworthiness the data from the questionnaire, interviews, and field notes were triangulated. The chair of the dissertation committee monitored the trustworthiness of the study. The data were reported using the underpinnings for the *testimonio* technique, which accorded veracity to the words of those who were interviewed.

### Significance of the Study

*As a black person, I am no stranger to race prejudice. But the truth is, that in the political world I have been far oftener discriminated against because I am a woman than because I am black.*

(Chisholm, p.1, 1969)

This study has importance in the field of educational leadership. The need for this research has been clearly articulated. Prominent researchers in the field such as Blount (1998), Brunner (2000a), Glass (2001), Grogan (1996), Shakeshaft (1999), and Tallerico (2000a) have called for further research on the topic of female access to the superintendency. "With a redefinition of requisite skills and characteristics of an effective school administrator, a teachable moment exists for erasing gender stereotypes and focusing on desirable characteristics that applicants (men or women) bring to the position of superintendent" (Logan, 1998, p. 3). Most research is limited to the study of white middle class male subjects and, moreover, much of the research has been focused through a patriarchal lens (Blount, 1998). Women have been cited as offering great potential for educational leadership in the future (Education Commission of the States, 2000; Glass, et al, 2001; Houston, 2004).

A deeper examination of the actual experience in the field yielded insight into what has changed and what remains to be changed. Little information was available about females in Iowa describing the work conditions in leadership

positions. Lindsey (1997) called for an academic environment that does not reinforce the invisibility of women (p. 284), and in Iowa, much of the information about women in the superintendency has been invisible.

This issue is not limited to a question of equity. Another pressing issue is that of educational leadership. Feminine leadership is important to institutions that are facing significant change. For example, in the era of No Child Left Behind legislation, schools are facing significant changes in the way they do business. Recent meta-analytic work indicates that democratic and participative leadership styles are more prevalent among women than men. (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Offermann & Bell, 1992). Women bring to the administrative practice many characteristics necessary for school reform (Brunner, 1998). "Women constitute the most important future candidate pool for the superintendency" (Glass, et al, 2001, p. viii).

Women are accessing the superintendency at a very slow rate. Gains toward gender representation balance may mislead people into believing that the issues have been resolved and require no further examination, pointing specifically to the gains made in female representation in elementary administration as a false euphoria. Because the percentage of females represented in the superintendency fell to less than 5% in the 1950s, it is projected that it could take 50 years to gain that level of representation in the superintendency back (Blount, 1998; Hyle, 1991). A corollary concern with the issue of few women occupying administrative positions in schools is that it does

not provide a positive role model for female students or for female teachers who could aspire to administrative leadership.

Providing a composite portrait of an Iowa female superintendent should help to define the challenges in accessing this important position. It should also contribute to the field by providing valuable information by articulating the attributes of those women who have successfully attained the position. An analysis of the current situation and making that analysis available to the profession should assist those who aspire to the position of superintendent.

### **Summary**

This study is important because it adds to the field of knowledge that might enable more females and other minorities to aspire to, and access, the position of superintendent. This study addressed needs that were supported by the literature and by state-level data. The need becomes more pressing because women have been recognized as the most promising leadership resource for the future of education. Women occupying the superintendency in Iowa represent a percentage rate well below that of their male colleagues. The rate of increase has been slow, yet women have the leadership traits necessary to facilitate the changes necessary for schools to meet the challenges they face.

The purpose of this study was to search out the barriers women currently face in accessing the superintendency and to articulate the attributes that have helped women access the superintendency. The study was based on a feminist-

constructivist approach that complimented the purpose of the study. The goal of the study was to share information with a focus on informing the educational field, including those marginalized from leadership opportunities in Iowa.

The overarching question guiding this study was: What does it take to become a female superintendent in Iowa? The primary methodology used in the study was a quantitative research survey to support 19 hypotheses based on the review of the literature and a previous study of similar nature completed in Indiana. To obtain an accurate and current depiction of the situation in Iowa, the study involved a survey of all 37 female superintendents serving districts in the 2003-2004 school year and 37 randomly selected male counterparts as a basis of comparison. A secondary qualitative methodology was used to enrich and expand the data from the survey. This inquiry was based on interviews with search consultants and female superintendents. The study combined the data from the survey questionnaire, the interviews from the search consultants, and the interviews from the female superintendents to create a composite portrait of a typical female Iowa superintendent.

## Chapter 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Women essentially have little formally structured control over the purposes or conditions of the profession they dominate numerically.

(Blount, 1998, p. 156)

*The extent to which women and minorities participate in administering the schools is one measure of education's real commitment to the ideal of equal opportunity for all Americans, an ideal that is far from being realized. (Coursen et al., 1989, p. 85)*

The focus of this study was to find and articulate the barriers that female superintendents confront, and to discern how women have overcome those challenges and have successfully accessed the superintendency in Iowa. What could be learned? What could be changed to ensure fair opportunity for all our educational leaders? This was explored by looking at the results from the survey questionnaire, interviewing search consultants, and by listening to women superintendents' stories in order to produce an accurate and in-depth portrait of a successful Iowa superintendent who also happened to be a woman.



Background and insight into the situation began with a review of selected literature related to women's issues, specifically focused on leadership and the superintendency in the field of K-12 education. To understand the environment of today's superintendent aspirants, it was necessary to take a look at the present situation in terms of the historical, cultural, and professional contexts that might persist in limiting or defeating worthwhile female candidates from attaining the superintendency. By articulating and consolidating a clear picture of the existing circumstances related to women as superintendents, the obstacles and barriers faced by this population, and how these superintendents have accomplished their goals, valuable information was revealed which could impact opportunities for those with potential to access positions of leadership in education.

This review of the literature considers the following:

1. The theoretical framework around which this study was designed.
2. A historical overview and discussion of trends supporting the inclusion of women in the superintendency defined in the context of the present situation.
3. A discussion of research pertaining to women in leadership roles and the gender and privilege bias encountered within that research.
4. Legislative initiatives including a perspective that traced the recent historical context of women and the effectiveness of the federal government in protecting women's rights.

5. The cultural and psychosocial obstacles that might have bearing on the low number of females in Iowa who were serving as superintendents.
6. The institutional obstacles such as the glass ceiling, evaluation processes and hiring process which were described at length.
7. A thorough description of the recruiting and application process to become a superintendent that provides insight into gender as a determiner in the hiring process.
8. A comparison of the male and female superintendents in terms of their career expectations, achievement style, and leadership disposition along with the gendered concept of power and the implications these areas have for accessing the superintendency.
9. A summary and determination of what the research could contribute to improving the accessibility of good candidates for the superintendency.

### Summary

Although there are over four million professional educators in the nation, there are less than 2,500 women who serve in executive leadership positions. The school system should be a model for equal opportunity for all Americans. The focus of this study was to find and define the barriers that female superintendents confront and to determine how women have overcome those challenges, and further, to compile those findings in a composite portrait of a typical female superintendent. The section concluded with an overview of how

the review of the literature would be organized. The following section explains the theoretical framework for the study.

### **Theoretical Framework**

*It is frequently stated that our schools mirror the society that they serve. It is also often claimed that if we are to change anything in our society, the best place to start is in our schools. Feminists believe that being male or female should not alter any individual's access to, experiences within or outcomes from education. A feminist critique of our educational system allows us to see inequities based on gender, even when such inequities may also include race, ethnicity or other factors as well as gender. (Reynolds & Young, 1995, p. 1)*

*What does the persistent engendered division of power reveal about the messages perpetuated by schools, institutions charged with helping to socialize our nations children? (Blount, 1998, p. 6)*

*Feminist scholarship pursues new questions, new categories, and new notions of significance which illuminate women's traditions, history, culture, values, visions, and perspectives. (Tetreault, 1985, p. 370)*

This study was grounded in a belief in justice—justice for males, females, races, and ethnic groups—groups that are intentionally or unintentionally disenfranchised from realizing their full potential within the field of educational leadership--in order to empower people to be able to use their talents to improve the educational system. The theoretical framework of this study was centered on the feminist-constructivist approach. This lens provided the best theoretical framework for meeting the purposes of this study.

Feminist theory is about justice. Using a feminist lens allowed consideration of the issues this study sought to discover and articulate. Gender is a social structure with a “fundamental basis of inequality.” Although knowledge is presumed to be inclusive, it is often premised on the “experience of Euro-American, class-privileged, heterosexual men” (Osmond & Thorne, 1993, p. 593). These authors explained that “doing gender” was the social interactive process of how people construct and reconstruct differences, which may result in a polarity that “marginalizes, silences and devalues females.” These processes undermine any effort to move to a new and more equitable social model (Fletcher, 2003). A portion of the literature review was devoted to citing those researchers and scholars who have taken a critical look at practices in K-12 education with the purpose of raising up and informing the talent that is contained in what appears to be a restrictive system.

The feminist approach allowed a “focus on the gaps and blank spaces of a male-dominant culture, knowledge and behavior” (Gossetti & Rusch, 1995, p. 15). From those gaps, an informed view could be constructed for how to successfully overcome or circumvent those areas. Feminists view gender as “a basic organizing principle that profoundly shapes/mediates the concrete conditions of our lives” (Lather, 1992, p. 91). What is invisible is not considered real. Feminists challenge the invisibility and distortion of women’s experiences and seek to understand how power in school employment has been structured unequally by gender (Blount, 1998).

Truth is about justice. Constructing deeper truth will broaden justice. Feminist research considers not only gender issues, but also the distribution of power and privilege, along with the powerful shaping and interactive forces of race, class, and sexual orientation. From its beginning, feminist research has been preoccupied with the politics of knowing and being known (Lather, 1992). The constructivist approach allowed both the researcher and the reader to make meaning of the information presented.

In this study the feminist perspective permitted an examination of gender as a system of cultural signs or meanings that have a direct effect on how social systems operate. Although there are other binary forces in opposition, such as old/young or rich /poor, which may mitigate the effects of gender--gender was cited most often in the research as the determining factor in job appointments made in education administration (Blount, 1998).

Challenging the ideas and assumptions about diversity and equity that exist in traditional educational theory is essential to developing new perspectives and to changing the social realities that foster marginalization (Gossetti & Rusch, 1995, p. 13). In considering these different aspects, it was observed that they were often intertwined. To capture a complete systemic picture, these aspects must be viewed as an aggregate. Brunner (2003) stated that “cultural norms were formed by aggregate data and, in the case of the superintendency, the cultural norms of the role were established by the data of white men” (p. 30). Sex segregation was a workplace *modus operandi* for perpetuating income, wealth, authority, and prestige inequality between men and women (England, 1992; Martini, 1989; Resking & Roos, 1990; Resking, 1993; 1988, as cited in Cognard-Black, 2004).

### Summary

Blount (1998) noted the persistent engendered division of power in the educational system and related it to the issue of justice for the nation's children. Feminist scholarship provided the logical theoretic basis from which to examine an ostensibly male dominated system because it provided the lens to critically view the issues that prevent equity from occurring in the present situation.

### **Description of the Present Situation**

*There is not a single state in our country where the proportion of women in educational leadership mirrors the female participation in the profession. (Wolverton, 1999, p.3)*

*The study documented the continuing existence, pervasiveness and power of gender bias at the highest levels of leadership and decision making in school districts. (Brunner, 2000b, p. 106)*

According to the most recent American Association of School Administrator's (AASA) survey, which is conducted nationally every 10 years, most superintendents were married (92.5%), white (94.9%), male (86.6%), of middle age (84.7%), came from small towns (64.9%), were moderately conservative in their social values and lifestyles (89%), and, for the most part, shared common values and opinions (Glass et al., 2001). An exact comparison to female superintendents could not be made because current percentages were not available; however, there was evidence to support the observation that in comparison to their male counterparts, female superintendents were more often Democratic, of a racial minority, and were single, widowed, divorced, or never married (Glass et al., 2001, Grogan & Brunner, 2005). Gupton and Appelt-Slick (1998, p. 7) mused that, "One has to wonder, when close to a third of the women

in top administrative positions has been divorced, at least once, is this a personal price for achieving leadership positions in the profession?"

Grogan and Brunner (2005) cited marriage as a "significant causality" of the superintendency (p. 49). In the AASA 2000 survey they noted that 13 percent of the female superintendents cited divorce as a lifestyle change made to accommodate the demands of the superintendency. They also noted that a supportive husband is extremely helpful to women in the superintendency quoting one respondent who said, "This job takes a team" (p. 49). Twenty percent of the respondents in the AASA 2000 survey indicated they were in a "commuter marriage" and 88% noted that relocation in order to take a superintendency was a major barrier (p.49).

"There is a dramatic under representation of the percentage of women serving as superintendents, which was paradoxical in the field of education, an enterprise dominated by women serving as teachers, principals and central office staff" (Glass et al., 2001, p. 15). In terms of advanced training, professional experience, numbers of degrees, and total numbers in the pool of women available for the superintendency, there is little justification for why such a small proportion of women are filling that position (Banks, 1995). "Earning advanced degrees and credentials (higher than those of most men) appears to be a way that women compete with men for elite positions" (Davies-Netzley, 1998, p. 348).

A question must be raised about whether women are preparing for the superintendency in the right way to be competitive in the Iowa. Iowa's statistics



were less favorable than the national statistics. In the 2003-2004 school year 37 females served as superintendents in Iowa's 352 school districts, amounting to 10.5%, or 2.9 percentage points below the national average. Four of the 37 female superintendents served in K-6 districts with students in grades 7-12 being enrolled into another district. Most females served in moderate to small districts, 24 of whom served in districts with student enrollment of 1,000 or less. Only one female was serving in a district having a student population of more than 4,500 students in the 2003-2004 school year (Appendix A).

Fisher (1995) in a content analysis of the congruence between transformational leadership and the hiring criteria listed by Iowa School boards who hired during the 1994-1995 school year found that

Only 15% of all of the hiring criteria . . . were deemed transformational in nature. There seems to be a large preference (65%) for a common ground of hiring criteria that, while important for any leader's success, are not reflective of the characteristics that are necessary for leaders to have if they are to help their schools successfully transform. The remaining criteria fell either into the context unit called 'managerial' (14%) or the context unit called 'neutral' (6%) (p. 130).

Although the numbers of female superintendents in Iowa and nationally were both trending upwards, the rate of increase over the past decade has been nominal. The number of females eligible for the superintendency depicts a

different story. According to the Iowa Department of Education 's Annual Condition of Education Report (2004), the number of women who are currently certified by the state as superintendents represents approximately 15% of the number of women who are currently practicing in that capacity in the state. There are no data as to how many of these certificated females are actually practicing either in teaching or administrative positions other than a superintendency (Appendix B).

To understand the environment of today's superintendent aspirants, it was necessary to take a look at the historical, cultural, and professional contexts of the situation that may have persisted in limiting or defeating worthwhile female candidates from attaining the superintendency.

We need to consider how barriers may change over time and how they may be linked together in larger systems that prohibit substantial change. We need to consider "survival" strategies within specific historical social context. We need to gather data on how employment equity or affirmative action initiatives impact on women and on men in education. (Reynolds & Young, 1995, p. 13)

### Summary

Nationwide the superintendency is predominately male and Caucasian. The teaching profession is approximately 71% female. The present situation finds Iowa almost 3 percentage points behind the national average of 13.4% rate for females serving as superintendents. Why is there such a disparity between the gender of those

who are in the teaching force and those who lead them? In Iowa, women's preparation for the superintendency may be incongruent with the expectations of what school boards want. With the exception of a short era when women outnumbered men in the superintendency, the position has remained a male bastion.

### **Historical Overview**

*There is little evidence that women have been hired because they are women, rather, the evidence indicates they are hired despite being women. (Brunner, 2000a, p. xiv)*

*Despite the advanced training, the number of advanced degrees held and the number of years served in the profession (which are equal to, or greater than, the pools from which males are drawn) there is no justification for the small numbers of women in leadership positions. (Banks, 1995, p. 78)*

*That men were systematically granted authority over women whose positions became ever more subordinate is a fact that cannot be dismissed as irrelevant. (Blount, 1998, p. 29)*

Researchers(Brunner, 1994; Glass et al., 2001) have noted that women have experienced ups and downs in their level of participation in leadership roles

in education. They allude to a connection between the upward spurts in female leadership and the considered undesirability of the position by men. When it was desirable in terms of power or salary, men have dominated. Through the years males have dominated the position of superintendent. Despite a willing and prepared workforce, protective legislation, such as Title IX, and the pretension of an espoused fair playing field, barriers obviously still exist which effectively limit the number of women who attain the superintendency (Blount, 1998). Clearly the educational system can be described as androcentric, and clearly this system has been slow to change.

With the exception of the early days of elementary school principalships, the numbers of women in school administration since 1905 demonstrated consistent male dominance. Women have never held the majority in the role of secondary principals or superintendents (Shakeshaft, 1991). Schmuck and Wyant (1981) observed, "women were at a decided disadvantage when competing for positions as secondary school principals" (p. 86). Shakeshaft (1991) echoed this observation by remarking that women have never held the majority in the role of secondary principals or superintendents.

There have been times of opportunity for women in educational leadership, however those times have been predicated on the economic and political status of men. The overall statistics bear witness to these facts (Blount, 1998). Skrla (2000a) noted that the zenith of females occupying the superintendency occurred in the 1930s when the percentage reached 13% (p.

297). Hansot and Tyack (1981) stated that there was no golden age for women in education administration because women have seldom attained the most powerful and prestigious administrative positions in schools. They pointed to the acculturated gender structure of males as managers and females as workers, which has remained relatively stable for the past 100 years. Instead of a golden age, they refer to women's progress as "a promise unfulfilled" (p. 51). Adler, Laney, and Packer (1993) took opposition to this viewpoint, citing the time from 1900-1930 as the golden age of women in school administration.

### Summary

Historically Iowa has reflected national trends with the highest percentages of females serving as superintendent in the 1920s and 1930s when the rate reached 13%. High points for women in the superintendency have been predicated on the political and economic interests of men. Women have never held a majority of the superintendencies or high school principal positions. The system has been androcentric and very slow to change.

### **Trends of Women in the Educational Field**

*The social construction of maleness in U.S. society, and therefore the social construction of the public school superintendency, is incompatible with the social construction of femaleness. (Skrla, 2000b, p. 297)*

*There is still much we do not know about sex discrimination about female career patterns, about women leaders, and about inclusive conceptualizations of managerial and administrative theory.*

(Dunlap & Schmuck, 1995, p. xi)

Hegemony is defined as the dominance of one group over other groups, with or without the threat of force, to the extent that, for instance, the dominant party can dictate the terms of trade to its advantage; or more broadly, that cultural perspectives become skewed to favor the dominant group (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>). Skrla (2000b) maintains that the construction of the superintendency is hegemonic in favor of white males. Blount (1998) noted that there remains cause for concern for this issue in the American educational system. Solomon (1985) observed that the status of women could be considered as a barometer for the whole system noting that the teaching profession remains highly feminized. Nationally, current estimates run in the area of 70-75% of the teaching profession who are female. According to the Iowa Public School Profile for 2003-2004, 71.5% of the state's teaching force was female. "The staggering degree of gender stratification in the superintendency . . . continues to disgrace education administration and receives little attention in the mainstream discourse of the profession" (Sheurich, 1995, cited in Skrla, 2000a, p. 5).

Of our nation's 13,728 superintendents, 1,984 are women, according to the U.S. Department of Education (Glass, 2000, p.1). Nationally, Iowa ranks near

the bottom in the percentage of female superintendents employed in the school system. Appendix C depicts that over the past seven years there have been small but steady increments in female superintendents in the state. The 2004-2005 percentage rate is lower. Instead of 10.4% of all Iowa superintendents being female, only 9.1% of the population was female in the 2004-2005 school year the level of the previous year. These superintendent positions are distributed proportionally across the state (Appendix D).

In her detailed account of why the educational field had been a popular job choice for men, Blount (1998) cited three major reasons for this phenomenon: First, an increased emphasis on pedagogy, which men found less attractive and less academic and therefore occupied a less respected level in education. Second, there were stiffer certification requirements, which men felt were not worth meeting because of the low wages teachers received. And finally, the control of certification shifted the locus of power toward the administrative end (Blount, 1998). From 1910-1950 women held between 9 and 11% of superintendencies at the national level, which had declined to 3% by 1970.

During World War II the number of women in administration increased, with many communities reversing discriminatory hiring policies, even welcoming married women back into the workforce (Hansot & Tyott, 1981). However, these women were dismissed from their positions when the men returned from the war. The number of men in education increased after World War II, in large part due to the G.I. Bill, which increased the number of men who received a college

education (Blount, 1998). Skrla (1999) noted that the normalization of the role of superintendent also began after World War II. This normalization perpetuated male dominance and the superintendency became defined as a male role. Women were excluded from educational leadership positions, despite their qualifications and success (Marshall, 1985). The consolidation of small schools, most of which were led by women, diminished the number of women administrators. Teaching became viewed as an occupation that complimented motherhood (Blount, 1998).

The 1950s and 1960s witnessed a revival in the prejudices against women that hindered their advancement into administration (Skrla, 1999). The Sputnik era, with increased emphasis on achievement in science and math, caused more criticism of women on the job. Women were seen as a problem in the field because they were viewed as too nurturing.

In a meta-analysis of the attitudes towards women from 1970 to 1995, using the Attitudes Toward Women Scale, Twenge (2000) found that the pattern of change in those scores trended toward more liberal/feminist attitudes with the exception of the samples taken in the southern United States, which were found to be marginally more conservative and traditional. Twenge attributed this general change in attitude to generational differences, effects of maternal employment and the individual's experience of cultural change.

The school restructuring movement in the 1970s, along with a new women's movement began to open opportunities for women as viable leaders



(Schmuck, 1995). "In the next twenty years, until 1990, there was a gradual increase of female superintendents to 5% overall" (Blount, 1998, p.180). Again, the wide disparity between the numbers of males and females occupying the superintendency was evident (Grogan, 1996; Ortiz & Marshall, 1988; Shakeshaft, 1991).

### Summary

Hegemony is the power of the dominant group to influence the situation to assure its continued control. The superintendency is a hegemonic institution favoring white males. Although women have been represented in greater percentages in administrative leadership for brief periods in our history, this has been determined by males. By 1970 only 5% of the superintendents in the United States were women. There has been an increase in the percentages since that time, particularly in the 1990s, but the trend has been slow and minimal.

### **Research and Gender Bias**

*There is a "patriarchal" nature in current research and practice, which can inhibit thinking and interacting to challenge the status quo. (Buzzanell, 1994, p. 341)*

*The bulk of research on white women . . . has been criticized as a form of victim analysis to the point of ignoring external causes that perpetuate discrimination. (Yeakey, Camp et al., 1986, p. 136)*

*Those who teach, research and write about the superintendency in the U.S., again overwhelmingly male, have largely reinforced the sexist gendering of this critical leadership position. (Skrla, 2000b, p. 293)*

*The refereed article is the product of an academic economy that produces, exchanges, and consumes knowledge within its own closed borders and measures these activities by its own standards. (Solomon, 1997, p. 185)*

#### Availability of Research about Women

Data about educational leadership positions disaggregated by gender have been inaccessible (Blount, 1998; Hansot & Tyack, 1981). These researchers note that the tacit issue with the lack of statistics is that if it does not exist statistically, then the problem cannot be addressed. Further, they note that there was no historical account of the ebb and flow of women's participation in administration. In her extensive studies of the history of women in the superintendency from 1873-1995, Blount (1998) observed the difficulty in obtaining data about women in the superintendency, agreeing with an earlier observation by

Tyack and Hansot (1981) that there was a “conspiracy of silence” (Blount, 1998 p. 4; Skrla, 2000a).

Theory and research with males as the subject have been pervasive throughout the profession, including the funding of research, the objects of study, and the use of research. In fact, until 1976, men did not begin researching the topic of women administrators (Shakeshaft, 1981). There was a tendency to overlook the fact that “any research was viewed from a certain lens, and therefore must be interpreted accordingly” (Shakeshaft, 1991, p. 150). Females have done “nearly all” the research on gender discrimination studies on the superintendency (Brunner, 1999; Skrla, 2000a, p. 3).

#### The Subjective Lens of Research

*Education is one place in which lofty ideals and mysty mythology cannot avoid meeting the realities of crude self-interest. (Saul, 1993, p. 167).*

*Education is an organization that has incestual conversations with its own voices. (Clegg, 1977, p. 37)*

Until recently, research has remained largely unexamined as to whether it contained masculine bias. The implications run deep in terms of this framework: to break down barriers, women were expected to be as competent as men in management positions (Shakeshaft, 1981). Shakeshaft (1991) further noted

that when women actually surpassed men on these expectations, the differences were not reported in the conclusions of the research. The importance of these findings rests with the fact that it addresses issues faced by women in leadership and the idea that women are often perceived as deficit males (Blount, 1998). The negative perception of women in leadership roles underscored the reason why they were underrepresented in administrative positions (Tyree, 1995).

Research on women in education has been subjective and has been reflective of how women have been treated in this system (Blount, 1998). Shakeshaft (1991) pointed out that “science and science-making” reinforce and perpetuate the dominant social values and conceptions of reality” (p. 150). In later work, Shakeshaft (1991) corroborated her earlier observations, noting that “research was a political and ideological act” and that misconceptions “extend beyond numbers and political barriers to the framework of how women are viewed and the construct through which their performance was evaluated” (p. xiii).

In the past, research has been either biased against women or has not acknowledged their existence. During the first half of the century, the textbooks written by the founding fathers of the superintendency were the collections of best practices gained from their own experiences and what they observed in surveys of the best school districts in the country (Glass, 2000). Educating school leaders was determined by powerful or privileged interests (Bates, 1980). In an

analysis of Burns' *Leadership* (1978), a seminal work on the subject, Thiele (1987) observed that the 462-page work referred to women's leadership behaviors only three times and regarded equality issues as a woman's problem. Gossetti & Rusch (1995) chastised respected researchers Bolman and Deal's *Reframing Organizations* (1991) for similarly using gendered examples for their frames that "reinforced the moral and ethical standards of men in the organization by using examples that were superficial and stereotypic" (p. 23).

Numerous theories and concepts from educational administration textbooks, including a scrutiny of Abraham Maslow's *Theory of Human Motivation and Self-Actualization* (1943), indicated how knowledge has been created to exclude the female experience and voice. Of the 46 cases Maslow studied, 42 were male. His work was singled out as defining self-actualization in prescribed sex-role fulfillment, which "devalued female experience and denied opportunities for a full range of human expressions" (Shakeshaft, 1991, p.151). Shakeshaft further contended that the extensive number of theories of educational administration she examined reflected this one-sided view of the world. From her analysis she concluded that the most significant conceptual weakness in this collection of theories was the researcher's lack of a broad perspective. She noted that "whether or not the process was intentional or subliminal, the end result was the same in the majority of the work examined: Women are not included" (pp. 151-152).

Funk (2004) completed an in-depth study on six outstanding female Texas superintendents, which yielded a detailed description of the traits of successful women administrators. Although the focus of literature such as this has become more inclusive, avoiding the stereotypical male descriptions of the superintendency (Grogan, 1996); much research considered a woman as invisible, using the marginalizing practices of exclusion, pseudo-inclusion, and alienation. Pseudo-inclusion was the process of regarding women from the viewpoint that they are special cases in research through a male-engendered lens (Thiele, 1987). When female behavior ran counter to the theory, the female rather than the theory was considered suspect (Blount, 1998).

Blount (1998) noted how few women were cited in administrative research by examining the *Educational Administration Quarterly* and *Educational Administration Abstracts*, journals that were viewed as significant forces in the field of educational administration. These journals effectively excluded women's voices and experiences. Although recent research about women superintendents differed from the earlier research practices, Skrla (1999) noted that this research has been marginalized from the mainstream discourse of educational administration research and has had little noticeable effect on it.

Consideration of females was also often overlooked in other professional journals. Researching the idea that professional journals provide an important resource for keeping education of leaders current in their field, Gossetti and Rusch (1995) conducted an ERIC search of eight major educational journals

between 1983 and 1992 for articles addressing diversity and equity. The findings were “devastating” (p. 28).

The total number of articles for each journal during the ten-year period clearly illustrates the limited conversation about diversity and equity among practicing professionals. The call . . . for leaders to be committed to fairness and equal opportunity was answered by a privileged silence in their professional journals. (p. 29)

As late as 2003, for example, a publication from the Colorado Association of School Executives made no mention specific to statistics about female superintendents although 11.5% of the respondents were women.

Even the decision as to which research articles to be published can be biased. In a discussion of the “Joan-John effect” involving the effect of gender on the selection of research articles to be published, Fouad et al., (2000) noted that “in cases in which the caliber of the article was outstanding, no gender bias existed with reference to a decision to publish; however, in cases in which the articles had ‘ambiguous merit’ it might be judged on the basis of the gender of the author” (p. 34). The feminist label could also influence hiring decisions, as well as observing what they called a “cross-dimension ambivalence” in which feminist research was respected, but not necessarily liked (MacDonald & Zanna, 1998)

### The Lens of Privilege

Another bias evident in the research was that of privilege. Gossetti & Rusch (1995) explained the power of a privileged lens was the ability to focus on

the subtle patterns of advantage used by the prevailing culture to exclude groups by marginalizing through “dominance and permission to control which embeds the ideologies of power, privilege and marginality into our schools”(p.17). The importance of this concept was that “a privileged perspective supports the silence, the reproductions of silence and ‘no problem’ as acceptable norms” (p. 17). When behaviors are studied through the lens of privilege, it highlights how difficult it is to modify viewpoints and actions.

Although access to education has profoundly changed women’s lives and American culture over the past 200 years, women still face issues of equality with men in terms of leadership possibilities in the educational field (Solomon, 1985). Men are still advantaged. Women’s greater responsibilities for children and housework made them poor candidates to bring about the ideal gender division of labor in the home. This freed men from non-work distractions and signaled their heightened work commitment as family breadwinners. “Until we challenge the structure of work that currently rewards stereotypical masculine attributes, as well as the traditional gender division of labor in the home, gender inequalities in earnings will persist” (Budig, 2002, p. 275).

### Summary

Women have basically been invisible in educational research until recent times. The lenses of research have been biased by acculturated perceptions of gender and by privilege. Privilege disallowed the discussion of anyone other than



the dominant group. Even though refuted by research, stereotypes of women, such as being poor business managers, remain part of our culture.

### **Business Acumen**

*Nearly 82 % of women superintendents in the AASA study indicated school board members do not see them as strong managers and 76% felt school boards did not view them as capable of handling district finances. (Glass, 2000, p. 4)*

Current trends toward a female style of management have not impacted the patriarchal hierarchy of education (Adler et al., 1993). In fact, these researchers further observed that men with experience in business and the military became the preferred candidates for school administration. Rational-legal bureaucracy became the expectation in organizational structure in education in the United States. As Buzzanell (1994) stated that traditional views consist of 3 themes: “competitive individualism, cause/effect linear thinking, and separation or autonomy” (p.344). Young & McLeod, (2001, p. 462) were more specific, citing “physical plant expertise, discipline skills, and budgeting knowledge—the hard-core leadership characteristics” which they noted were all inconsistent with women’s leadership styles.

The perception that women are not strong in the area of finance persists. The primary emphasis in the early years was for the superintendent to attend to

the business of the school (Kowalski & Strouder, 1999). During the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, larger school boards slowly moved toward “a more corporate model of management and governance” (Glass et al., 2001, p. 3). Historically, the school superintendent was viewed as a quasi businessman. It was not until the 1980s that the role of superintendent as “expert manager came under attack by school reformers” (Glass et al., 2001, p. 3).

The concept of superintendent as business manager and male as the superior business manager still exists today. There are a significant number of job descriptions and vacancy notices that emphasize managerial skill, budgeting knowledge, and physical plant expertise. Women are perceived to have less business sense and negotiating skill than men (Shepard, 1998).

### Summary

Despite research to the contrary, women are perceived as weak or incapable in the area of finance. Because the superintendency is perceived to be a financial management position, women must overcome prejudice by school boards in this area in order to access a position.

### **Legislative Initiatives**

*Regardless of the notions of equality and justice which are supposedly inherent in the legal process, the law cannot*

*realistically be defined as gender-neutral much less gender equal.*  
(Lindsey, 1997, p. 339)

*After two decades of good intentions, it was hard to dispute that the facts demonstrate minimal advancement for women inside the profession in those domains controlled by external decision makers. (Robertson, 1993, p. 4)*

*Considering the small numbers of minority and female superintendents, job discrimination should be a national concern.*  
(Glass et al., 2001, p. 45)

*The political institution and its legal foundation provide the critical lens through which all gender relations are viewed. (Lindsey, 1997, p. 338)*

*Another element of the American socio-cultural control was that these are unfriendly times for affirmative action. (Tallerico, 2000a, p. 84)*

*Despite resistance, bureaucracy reigned and with it male dominance of administrative positions. Beliefs about women's place*

*sometimes found their way in to laws restricting women in school administration. Historically there has been legislative discrimination towards women in administrative roles, which was a reflection of the larger culture of the day. (Hansot & Tyack, 1981, p. 33)*

#### Implementation of the Law

“The U.S. context in which women superintendents work is one that remains largely untouched by the weak gender equity policy that does exist” (Skrla, 2000b, p. 299). Skrla made the point that the federal government plays a minimal role in educational issues in the United States. They are limited by two weak policy approaches that were both centered around funding. Funding is offered as an incentive to grow programs and it is withdrawn for noncompliance with policy. Gender equity remains largely an unfunded mandate.

Kozol (1991) remarked that equity in education represents a formidable threat to other values, which would be resisted just as bitterly as school desegregation. He further noted that it was not clear that even an affirmative decision of the high court “would be any more effective . . . in addressing something so profoundly rooted in American ideas” (p. 222). In many areas of legislation there does not exist a confluence of the letter of the law and the spirit of the law. Without this agreement, the two can actually work against one another. Those who have not closely examined the effects of legislative efforts to promote and protect gender equality would believe that our government has solved these issues. That is a naïve belief (Lindsey, 1997).

Subtle methods were employed to avoid gender equity. Giving similar jobs different titles to justify differences in pay, for example, has circumvented the Equal Pay Act of 1963. Companies tended to give less training to women citing cost as a factor because women were perceived as not remaining as long in a position as a man. Less training means less job opportunity, so lower pay for females becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

There is also an implication that a by-product of equity legislation might have caused gender discrimination to become more covert. Suggesting that school systems “devise methods of superficial compliance,” Schmuck and Wyant (1981) cited the long-held tradition of “flagrant violations of the law” suggesting that “experience and tradition remain the rules of thumb by which many school districts operate” (p. 76). Policy statements and written plans could be regarded with skepticism, because it was one thing to adopt a policy or a plan; it was another thing to keep equity issues firmly in mind when carrying out those policies, particularly in the area of recruiting and selecting candidates for administrative positions (p. 85).

#### Title VII

Women have been recipients of a bonus of the civil rights legislation, which technically increased their personal rights. During the debate of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the Smith Amendment, which made gender discrimination, illegal, was added to assure the defeat of the legislation. However, the plan

“backfired” (Lindsey, 1997, p. 339). The Act was passed and the Smith Amendment became Title VII, which

makes it unlawful for an employer to refuse to hire an applicant, to discharge an employee or to discriminate against any individual with respect to ‘compensation, terms, conditions or privileges of employment because of such individual’s race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. (Lindsey, 1997, p. 339)

Lindsey further cited Title VII as the most significant piece of legislation yet produced to prohibit job discrimination based on gender.

Title VII prohibited sexual harassment, which includes an intentional hostile environment in the workplace. Defined by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, it was not until the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings that the provisions became widely publicized. Following those hearings, sexual harassment lawsuits burgeoned (Lindsey, 1997). Blount (1998) took a more cynical view of Title VII noting, “numerous loopholes in the legislation permitted and continued to allow discriminatory hiring practices.” Blount expounded by noting that “even though relatively few women have won employment discrimination cases through Title VII, the amendment has served to make employers and employees alike aware of the possibility of legal redress for unfair employment practices” (p. 140). Skrla (2000b) shared Blount’s skeptical view of Title VII legislation stating that “the U.S. context in which women

superintendents work is one that remains largely untouched by the weak gender equity policy that does exist” (p. 299).

The Equal Pay Act of 1963 mandated that males and females receive equal salary for equal work; however, the outcomes have not been particularly evident. Occupations remain gender-stratified and gender-segregated. “The question, then, becomes how to assess jobs on the basis of skill level, effort, and responsibility” (Lindsey, 1997, p. 340). Chaffins, Forbes, Fuqua, and Cangeme (1995) noted that males and females attach more prestige and respect to male-held or male-dominated positions.

In this study the issue is how to compare salaries and benefits between male and female superintendents. The financial composition of the superintendent’s salary package was often very complex. Salaries differ by size of the district, job description, and area of the state. These are the overt considerations. Sometimes, the fringe benefit package equals half of the stated salary amount (Glass, 2000, p. ix). An indication that gender discrimination occurs at the school board level was evidenced in the difference in the contract provisions extended to female superintendents by boards. For example, extra benefits such as conference fees, car, or credit card accounts are frequently less generous to female superintendents. The question necessarily follows, then, that if the contracts are second-class, do school boards regard female superintendents as second-class as well (Paven et al., 1996).

#### Affirmative Action

*Although overt discrimination is out of style and indeed legally actionable if applied to hiring and other personnel decisions, covert and subtle forms of discrimination continue and can have a great impact on women's lives. (Fouad, Brehm, Iijima, Kite, Shibley, & Russo, 2000, p.16)*

There was an unintended bonus for women in the federal policy of Affirmative Action, the intent of which was to balance the opportunities for African-Americans. Affirmative Action has been interpreted as a means to create gender balance in the workplace. However, as Lindsey (1997) noted, these pieces of legislation were subject to court enforcement, the stance of each presidential administration, and the interpretation by the media, which affects public sentiment. There are presently numerous challenges in the courts concerning various aspects of Affirmative Action.

### Title IX

Title IX of the Educational Amendment Act of 1972 was enacted to prohibit gender discrimination in any school receiving federal assistance and has had greatest impact in the area of athletics. This was a significant piece of legislation dealing with gender equity in education, which decreased discrimination:

At overt and formal levels. [However], noticeable discriminatory policies and practices still exist at all educational levels. Admittedly, Title IX was a major effort in dealing with gender inequity in



education. But political maneuvering and charges of reverse sexism are damaging to consensus building. (Lindsey, 1997, p. 287)

To offset this, Lindsey called for assessing Title IX as a formal legal approach in light of the informal biases in education. Lindsey further noted that until our society opens the willingness to pursue the spirit of the law, legislation remains an important, but somewhat ineffective, protection for women. However, women's advocacy groups in education administration have not pursued discrimination through the courts, and have typically been opposed to such action (Schmuck, 1995).

Stromquist (1997) was much more reserved in her appraisal of the Title IX legislation, stating that it has no method for enforcement, noting that the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) has faced meager budgeting and therefore the intent of the legislation has not been carried out. Skrla (2000b) concurred with this assessment of Title IX noting that the OCR that is charged with enforcing the provisions of this legislation has suffered from an inadequate budget that reduced it "to the level of a rhetorical statement of what women's rights in education ought to be"(p. 299).

Blount (1998) noted that Title IX was responsible for opening graduate educational opportunities to women and to assure female participation in sports programs. She also noted that despite this legislation "many women have found that enforcement of the legislation in cases of sex discrimination in school employment has been weak at best" (p 142).

## Summary

Legislation addressing gender equity was enacted in the 1960s and later, however it has been subject to political influences that have not always rendered it effective. Lack of adequate funding made provisions difficult to enforce.

Although significant legislation has been passed, there is a vast dissonance between the letter of the law and the spirit of the law. Even with the current rate of accession it is projected that it may take between 75 and 100 years for women to be equitably represented at top levels of leadership. According to the Glass Ceiling Commission (1992), as a culture we have not come to terms with the deeply rooted misconceptions about the capabilities of women.

### **Cultural and Psychosocial Obstacles**

*This culture can be the one a woman lives in, but more damning yet, it can be the one she carries around and complies with within her own mind. (Estes, 1992, p.189)*

*It was important that women's current poor representation in formal school leadership was not necessarily an inherent condition of the institution of schooling but rather was the result of social interactions that have unfolded in specific historical contexts. (Irby & Brown, 1998, p. 8)*

### Cultural Expectations and Obstacles

*The women in the study were certain that women, in general, have a choice. They believed that women could choose to act like women, that they did not have to act like men and stupidly invite trouble. This focus on choice submerged the gender-specific fact that women had, in reality, almost no choice, if they wanted to succeed in their role as superintendents. (Brunner, 2000 b, p. 97)*

*Nothing has changed for women in the superintendency because the normalizations of gendered perceptions are so deeply engrained in education on both the individual and cultural level. (Skrla, 1999, p. 19)*

*Sometimes beliefs and actions quite natural for men superintendents were unnatural for the women because of the gender-specific expectations of our culture. (Brunner, 2000b, p. 83)*

Gender characteristics are interpreted through the subjective lens people use to observe and judge the behavior of others. This means that the choices made about behavior are guided by the cultural expectations for males and females (Bem, 1993). hooks (1990) in her work advocating for the cultural

liberation called for confronting the socially constructed oppressor within. The presence of others, or the personality of the group surrounding an individual, influences that person's role depending on the context (Eagly, 1987; Smith, Noll, & Brandt, 1999). In other words, gendered self-concepts change according to various contexts within which individuals interact (Bem, 1993). Self-concept is, at least in part, determined by the cultural/ professional context. Blount (1998) observed that women in power are often regarded as abnormal or deviant.

Steele (1997) observed that the perception of stereotypes on performance has deep-seated impact. The definition of self often rests on culture-driven stereotypes. In speaking about gender differences, Goldberg (1999) addressed three universal institutions as being created through observation of a society's population, which he called the "social law of large numbers" (p. 1). The result of this observation sets limits on, and gives direction to, expectation and social reality. The three universal institutions he addressed were:

1. Patriarchy: The upper positions of every hierarchy are overwhelmingly filled by men.
2. Male status attainment: The highest status roles are occupied primarily by males. "It is why in every society, it is males who more readily exhibit whatever behavior is required for attainment of status" (p. 2).
3. Male dominance: Both men and women feel that authority resides in the male and that the female must circumvent the male to attain power.

Haslet, Geis, & Carter (1992, p. 29) concurred with Goldberg's observation, defining gender stereotypes as common culture-wide beliefs about how men and women differ in personal qualities and characteristics.

Lewontin, Rose, and Kamin (1985) maintained that cross-cultural roles appear to lie more in the eye of the beholder than in the social reality that was being observed (p. 2). The masculine traits tended to be described as "instrumental, and agentic" which the researchers suggested imply the ability to accomplish tasks. Feminine traits are "expressive or communal with a disposition to be sensitive and nurturing to others" (p. 31).

Managerial job expectations center on stereotypical masculine traits such as drive, and being objective, assertive, and authoritative (Deal & Stevenson, 1998; Haslet et al., 1992). Management attributes, such as supportiveness, attentiveness, and collaboration, which are more closely associated with females, are marginalized or dismissed even though these characteristics tend to enhance morale and productivity (Herkelmann, Branham, Bush, Pope, & Gangemi, 1993; Wood, 2003). Although they have noted the need for further investigation, Dennis & Kunkel (2004) noted that it is not gender per se but the fact that people associate certain attributes with the male or female gender which determines the perception of the leadership style. Van Engen, van der Leeden, and Willemsen (2001) also attributed these descriptions to the stereotypes people have of leaders.

“Aspiring women have no power to challenge or change requirements and [therefore] must find ways to convince men in power positions that their ascribed handicaps are unimportant.” Thus they develop impressive management repertoires, which Marshall (1985) called a “spoiled identity” (p. 134). Marshall noted that another way of coping with this perception is for women to acquiesce to the normative controls of the school and maintain culturally defined roles, often delaying or retreating from career involvement. “In order to survive, these women pose in gender-appropriate behaviors, which confirm previous culturally-defined perceptions of how women should act to penetrate the male-dominated administrator socialization process and filtering system” (p. 488). The point is that women must find coping mechanisms, which manifest themselves in many different ways, including their communication styles (Tannen, 1990). Brunner (2000b) used the following quote from her qualitative research to illustrate the issue with communication:

I think that women basically have to talk the man's world. They have to know it; they have to be almost twice as knowledgeable about any issue because they're challenged more. And their credibility depends on them being able to give answers immediately whereas men are not thought of that way. Men don't give half as much in a presentation as a woman does. And they [men superintendents] are believed just as much and maybe more so, because the presentation is made by a man. (p. 99)

Brunner (2000b) also noted in her research that she “consistently found that women superintendents were extraordinary listeners” (p. 93). “The ability to listen was, in no small measure, a critical piece of the way they defined and used power. Collaborative or shared power, by definition requires a substantial amount of listening” (p. 93).

Adjusting to a male-dominated environment is not without a price. In her study of reflections on life and the principalship, Colflesh (2000) found the “staggering and unexpected theme” of loss. She stated:

As I reflected on the study’s findings, I was, most of all, saddened by the women’s collective sense of loss as they admitted that their administrative colleagues, both principals and central office, often did not share their passion for leading change in the district.

(p. 6)

So intense was this theme that Colflesh called for further research to be done in this particular area.

### Summary

The culture is controlled by hegemonic expectations. Because the culture is male-dominated, women face difficult decisions. Can they achieve and succeed in the cultural dissonance of male expectations and the stereotypes attached to females? The subtle but powerful cultural expectations can affect female job performance. One of their survival techniques is silence.

### Silence

*The overwhelmingly male-dominated culture of education administration has created a situation in which the silencing of women's views is particularly acute. (Skrla, 2000a, p. 3)*

Skrla (2000a) discussed silence, as “. . . institutional silence, political silence, personal silence, even silence about silence—multiple intertwined silences all related to the shifted or prohibited speech about women's unequal position in society in general and the superintendency in particular” (p. 1).

The courts have often favored employees; however, despite this trend, many women employees who are experiencing harassment, remain silent (Bell, Myerson, Nkomo, & Scully, 2001) for fear of committing “career suicide” (Lindsey, 1997, p. 342). Skrla (1999) discussed the idea of silence, which she defined as the “inability, unwillingness, reluctance or refusal of female school administrators to discuss gender's role in their work lives” (p. 13). This was attributed to women conforming to feminine cultural expectations (Skrla, 1999). She continued to explain that “being feminine was to suffer uncomplainingly in silence” (p. 14).

Matthews (1995) discussed the issue of silence in another framework. In her study of how women administrators view equity issues, she conducted 29 in-depth interviews with female administrators in Oregon. She concluded that four types of categories existed among these participants: activist, advocate, isolate, and individualist. Activists and advocates were aware of equity imbalances within



systems and addressed the situations. Isolates and individualists, on the other hand, functioned as tokens or emulated male leadership styles and were largely unaware of any equity imbalance in their situations. She concluded that society exists only as individuals are conscious of it (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, as cited in Matthews, 2001, p. 263).

### Summary

Silence occurs on many levels for women in educational leadership. Silence is a means that women use to cope in a male dominated workplace. If women are not silent, they risk ruining their careers. Some females become silent to their own career needs and their identities by conforming to feminine cultural expectations, including that of family.

### Issues of Family

*On average, life in the workplace presents complicated challenges to women that men do not face. At least for men in the dominant racial, ethnic and socioeconomic class, there was usually some basic harmony among competence, respect, liking, influence and career success. For women there was still considerable dissonance. (Fouad et al., 2000, p. 20)*

*Among married couples with children, mothers are spending the same amount of time doing things with and taking care of their*

*children on days when they are working today as they did 25 years ago (3.3 to 3.4 hours). (Families and Work Institute, 2004, p. 12)*

*The motherhood mandate issues a command to females of all ages instructing them that motherhood demands selfless devotion to their children and a subordination of one's own life to the needs of children and family. (Lindsey, 1997, p. 194)*

Unless a woman chose not to have a family, her future was less predictable because of managing childcare, a traditional expectation, which Crittendon (2001) calls the “mommy tax” (p. 5). “The attitude which places more value on a woman’s home-based life collides with women’s work outside the home and is associated with all levels of economic disparities existing between men and women” (Lindsey, 1997, p. 246). This can lead to stigmatization of women in this position (Grogan, 1996). “Women’s lack of mobility was the strongest barrier and the personal lives of women continue to be a perceived limitation. Women feel more place bound than do men because of the cultural expectations that a woman is expected to follow a man’s career” (Lindsey, 1997, p.182). “The assumption for men was that the family will move and benefit from the new career opportunity” (Glass et al., 2001, p. 90).

Wilson (2004) cited the following statistics from the *Galinsky, Salmond and Bond (2002) study entitled Leaders in a Global Economy: A Study of*

*Executive Women and Men* (p. 59) characterizing the responsibilities of present-day women:

- 74% of women have a spouse or partner with a full time job;
- 75% of men have a spouse or partner at home.
- 18% of women (versus half as many men) delayed marriage or commitment to 'manage both their career and their personal lives.
- 35% of women delayed having children for their careers, versus 12% of men.
- In the executive ranks, 90% of men have kids, compared to 65% of women.

### Summary

Despite ideas to the contrary, women in the workforce still handle much of the management of the home and the nurturing of the children. Part of the patriarchal culture is the expectation for women to be the primary caretaker and nurturer for the family. This pressure affects how a woman shapes her career and when she feels free to pursue it.

### Career Goals

Not all researchers agreed about career goals for women. Men and women in comparable employment structures place the same importance on promotion (Cassirer & Reskin, 2000). Women who chose to go into the administrative field viewed that move as an opportunity to help a wider group of children. In their 2001 study, Young and McLeod (2001), for example, found that

women's goals "extended beyond a primary focus on children to making 'a difference for teachers and staff' and to positively affect the teaching process" (p. 4). Glass (2000) pointed out that there is a concern as to whether administrative jobs offer an appeal to women, noting that contrary to the need to teach and to make a difference, models for educational administration include leadership modes that focus on the rational, mechanistic, organic, and bargaining styles. These styles contribute to the concept of school leadership as bureaucracy. "The point here is that women today who choose to enter education as a career may want to be teachers, not administrators. This may be the single most important reason why women candidates for the superintendency are so few" (Glass, 2000, p. 31).

Young and McLeod reported that women often refer to their careers as having "just evolved" (p. 465). Typically women aspire to positions as elementary principals, secondary assistant principals, or curriculum directors, administrative positions that hold the highest concentrations of females. They borrowed the footprint metaphor offered by Gosetti and Rusch (1995) to explain these typical aspirations by women. Initially the previously mentioned positions were most often held by women. As a new footprint is clearly visible and becomes more obscure over time, these positions came to be thought of as the norm and gendered expectation for women in education.

## Summary

Career goals for women are typically unplanned. Women usually wait until their families are grown before attempting administration; therefore they enter administration at older ages than do men. Women are also more motivated in their work to make a difference rather than by power or salary.

## Psychosocial Obstacles

*Once you understand they don't desire intelligent, thoughtful, competent people-especially Anglo females—then you're okay.*

(respondent quoted in the Byrd-Blake study, 2004, p. 8)

*Denial protects women from the realities of discrimination, even as they voice examples of inequality.* (Tripses, 2004, p. 3)

*Those who contend that male dominance is a universal, cultural phenomenon usually base their argument on the biological differences between men and women, and they tend to conclude that this state of affairs is thus inevitable. While we do not discount the influence of biology, we see male dominance essentially as a social phenomenon, and we believe that although it is ubiquitous, it is not inevitable.* (Stockard & Johnson, 1981, p. 235)

The way men and women regard their jobs can be contrasted. Henning and Jardin (1977) found that men described a job as a series of tasks that must be completed, while women define a job as something to be done daily, to be survived in order to earn a living. Men see a career as a series of positions or jobs resulting in greater monetary rewards, prestige, power, and recognition. Women see a career as a job, which provides self-fulfillment. Women rarely see the final goals of a job or career in terms of power and recognition as do men (Schmuck & Wyant, 1981).

Research indicates that typically women do not approach career paths in a methodical way. Many women prefer to be where they feel they can make a difference to those with whom they work as well as to themselves (Shakeshaft, 1991). Gilligan (1993) observed that women see relationships as webs or networks rather than hierarchies. It was suggested that this web making could obstruct hierarchical planning on the part of females. "For many women the climb to the top of the mountain was not even desirable—they would rather gather around the valleys and rivers, where life was really lived" (Biklen, 1985, p. 216). Biklen noted that the concept of career has been based on a male model that was free from the primary responsibility of the family. Studies of male superintendents note that their favorite time in their career was at an elementary school principalship; however, they preferred to advance.

## Summary

As a result of the cultural expectations placed on them, women experience guilt and related anxiety or uncertainty. There is a cultural expectation that women should be less confident and they tend to devalue their own skills and intellect. Although beliefs about women as deficit leaders have been refuted by research, those beliefs still remain powerful in the culture and with women themselves. These beliefs become internalized and therefore disadvantage women.

## Internal Barriers

*The critical issue for women in leadership today is to clearly articulate those values within, understand the strengths of feminine leadership, and join forces with others, men and women alike, who are equally passionate about relationships, the strengths of diversity, and ways of organizing organizations that affirm everyone. (Tripses, 2004, p. 5)*

Women cannot, and will not, be genuinely empowered until we understand our own need for power and our deep fear of it.

(Moglen, 1983, p. 133)

Papalewis and Leonard (1987) discussed personal and institutional gender discrimination as inhibiting access of females into educational leadership. They cited such limiters as: many women actually fearing success, their tentative

speech styles (intentionally being submissive), and men being more image engrossed than their female counterparts. In exploring this fear concept further, Lindsey (1997) observed that women do not fear success but are aware that men and women are evaluated differently when they achieve. In a high-stakes environment, Lindsey suggested that it may be possible that women do not fear success so much as they fear failure. Seeking a more androcentric perception of the fear concept, Lindsey observed that both genders are sensitive to the results of their achievement whether they are successful or otherwise, observing that “without a doubt an academic environment that does not reinforce the invisibility of women would be beneficial” (p. 284).

The cultural stereotypes and pressures and the psychosocial issues pose valid barriers for women. When cultural practices do not pose restraints, there are still other internal barriers with which women must deal (Shakeshaft, 1991). Women generally accept the belief that femininity and professional career achievement are incompatible and may refrain from achieving because of guilt, anxiety or uncertainty. They “have been socialized to develop less confidence, less independence and lower self-esteem and therefore tend to devalue their own skills and intelligence” (Herkelmann et al, 1993). It was further observed that women “developed internal barriers—low self-confidence, the idea that leading was for men” (p. 135). Herkalman et al. found that women were unsure of their talents and relied on others to reassure them of their place in the professional world. They attributed this need to modesty and lack of confidence. Frequently



women “ de-emphasized their own capabilities and ambitions” (Young & McLeod, 2001, p. 466). Le-Page-Lees (1997) termed this the “imposter complex” in which women failed to display how smart or skillful they are in order to avoid dealing with an acceptance of culture reality (Austin, 2001).

Women in a male sex-typed situation and men in a female sex-typed situation tend to question their competence. In education women may perceive of themselves as competent with regard to instructional matters, yet with regard to the male sex-typed role of administration believe themselves to be inferior. It is clear that perceived competence has clearly been a negative factor in the past for women educators with regard to the personal contingency involved in careers in administration. (Carlson & Schmuck, 1981, p. 122)

“After two decades of good intentions, it was hard to dispute that the facts demonstrate minimal advancement for women inside the profession in those domains controlled by external decision makers” (Robertson, 1993, p. 4). The external barriers to the glass ceiling are complex. Cultural values are deeply engrained, often in the subconscious, so that they are difficult to examine. Societal norms have been created largely by, and for, men, and so social practices tend to reflect and support men’s experiences and life situations. Men and masculine values dominate our societal order (Archer , 2003). Equality arguments neglect to consider that normative behavioral patterns and models for

successful work behavior are male. If women do not, or cannot conform, they suffer the consequences.

Women are more likely to categorize themselves using their gender when in a primarily male environment, such as administrators. (Jackson, Stone, & Alvarez, 1992). Women's different experiences often bring them into conflict with the dominant establishment and therefore they are compelled to conform to the hegemonic view (Grogan, 1996). When this happens women's social identities become the most salient aspect of their self-systems, which blurs their individuality. (Gardner, Van Eck Peluchette, & Clinebell, 1994).

Gender identity is critical in accessing executive positions, not only how others perceive that identity, but also how the aspirants perceive themselves. Previous studies have detected differences in the gender-role perceptions, specifically those of male and female managers (Heilman, Block, Martell, & Simon, 1989; Kunkel, Dennis, & Waters, 2003). Wirth (1998, p.241) noted that in 1997 the International Labor Organization stated that social attitudes and cultural bias were major factors that held women back from attaining higher-level jobs. Schein (2001) addressed this stereotyping phenomenon as the "think manager-think male" mind set which was a "major psychological barrier to women in the United States" (p 675). The idea that women were workers and males were managers has remained relatively constant for the past century (Shakeshaft, 1991). Valian (1998) similarly found that the small imbalances between the

perceptions and evaluations of men and women about gender accumulate to advantage men and disadvantage women.

In researching the issue of low representation of women in key educational leadership positions, Fauth (1984) cited the four myths of why women are not more successful:

- Women don't have the characteristics to be administrators;
- Women lack support of teachers and community
- Women do not aspire to the superintendency
- Women lack training and experience.

Each of these myths is considered separately followed by a research-based discussion of the myth.

1. Women don't have the characteristics to be administrators. Gilligan (1993) discussed the concept of woman as the lesser gender. Drawing from the story of the Garden of Eden, which in Judeo-Christian tradition portrays woman as deviant, and extending to Freudian theory, which regarded females as disadvantaged by nature; women have experienced cultural bias and the deprivation of societal equity. In the introduction to her book, Gilligan (1993) stated that talking about difference and the consequent theorizing of "difference" creates difficulty. The problem resides in the readiness with which "difference becomes deviance and deviance becomes sin in a society preoccupied with statistical normality and historically puritanical values" (p. xviii). Later, in the same introduction, Gilligan observed, "The political has

become psychological in the sense that men's disconnection and women's dissociation perpetuate the prevailing social order. The psychological process and the capacity to resist these separations and dissociations become political acts" (p.xxvii).

It has also been a common conjecture that women are not equal to the task of educational leadership. If the position of principal was considered as one of the main prerequisites to the superintendency, then research on women as principals could be considered a fair measurement of their competency for this position. Studies between 1956 and 1979 demonstrated that female principals were considered by their superiors and subordinates to be equal to, or better than, male principals in the areas of overall leadership and capabilities (Fauth, 1984; Hudson & Rea, 1998). Ratings of women principals on several areas of leadership, including maintaining a supportive building climate, perceiving and solving problems, school and community relations, ability to cope, emotional control, and the ability to handle personal and organizational power, demonstrated similar results. Women equaled or exceeded men in each of these categories (Smith, 1978).

2. Byrd-Blake (2004) noted that "men are supportive of other men" and that women need to make a more "collective, cohesive effort" to support one another (p. 10). In their quest for equality this researcher advocated that women must confront the external barriers and the internal forces that pressure them daily. Byrd-Blake further asserts that women are currently at

the center of the discourse of the value crisis in America, either as mothers, homemakers, or workers, yet they are visibly absent among the leaders of that debate. The deeply held beliefs that mothers are key to the family and the idea of the “good mother” subtly designates women to the private sector and men to the public sphere—supporting the familiar phrase “a woman’s place was in the home.” The role of mothering causes many women teachers not to pursue the principalship or any other leadership position.

Recognizing the time demands required of administration, women often choose to spend non-working time with family. Women’s personal and professional lives are intertwined and women administrators report being thought of as women first and administrators second (Grogan, 1996). Glass (2000) noted that this was consistent with traditional gender socialization observing that in our culture men have been socialized to aspire to be leaders in order to better provide status and resources for their families. Brinson (1997) observed that much of the ability to be successful as a superintendent might be attributed to the help and support of the superintendent’s spouse and family (p. 29). “A helpmate wife was a necessity of life in the superintendent’s family” (Glass et al., 2001, p. 22). Women need support encouragement and empathy in order to advance (Irby & Brown, 1998). Calling this the “riddle of the heart” Brunner (1996) noted that women superintendents have consciously altered or simplified their lives and their understanding of their roles within our culture in order to remain successful in

their positions. “Developing . . . the struggle for parity in public life by women centers around the huge gap between traditional ideals of this institution and social reality” (Fatoye-Matary, 1997, p. 3).

3. Women don’t aspire to the superintendency. Women account for 52% of the people seeking advanced degrees in education administration. They hold more than 50% of the administrative positions in central offices. Among these administrators, nearly 40% desire to move to superintendency. “The research suggests that the gender gap stems from a male bias in the superintendent-search process and job demands that make it tough to balance work and family” (Curphey, 2003, p. 1). “Most traditional approaches to the glass ceiling and to management assume that stereotypical masculine traits must be emulated . . . [There was an implication] that women will succeed, in time, through traditional masculine behavior” (Buzzanell, 1995, p. 2).

Data suggest the near absence of women in the superintendency may have less to do with their lack of training, availability or presence in the administrator pipeline than other factors related to search and selection processes. During the past decade, the number of women eclipsed men in professional preparation programs. (Glass et al., 2001, p. 15)

4. Women lack the experience and training. If you can’t access a job, you can’t build experience. “Experience seemed to be the telling factor that determined an aspirant’s chances for advancement through the selection

process, just as lack of experience was the reason most frequently cited for not advancing women” (Schmuck & Wyant, 1981, p. 93). “The critical criterion for accession to high-level positions is work experience and close associations with the decision makers at the higher levels of the structure” (Peitchinis, 1989, p. 67).

Despite using new paradigms and different analytic frames, current research continues to reinforce earlier findings that nothing has changed for women in the superintendency “because, at deeper levels, where those normalizations operate within individuals and organizations, nothing has changed” (Skrla, 1999, p. 18). The behavior of men and women in administration and the culture to which they belong have deeply hegemonic normalizations in the “rules, rituals, expectations, discourses and practices” of the organization (Skrla, 1999, p. 19). Literature focused on overcoming barriers was nonexistent for males, making the world of female administrators different if only for the reason that they face sex discrimination and barriers” (Brunner, 1994, p. 79).

### Summary

As a result of the cultural expectations on women, women experience guilt and related anxiety or uncertainty. There is a cultural expectation that women should be less confident and they tend to devalue their own skills and intellect. These become internalized and therefore disadvantage women. Although beliefs

about women as deficit leaders have been refuted by research, those beliefs still remain powerful in the culture and with women themselves.

### **Institutional Obstacles/The Glass Ceiling**

*The days of overt gender discrimination in hiring, pay and promotion may have ended, but full equality in the workplace remains an elusive goal. (Eathington, 2004, p. 1)*

*There was an "illusion of equality" which the government has put forth in an effort to prove the glass ceiling no longer exists.*

(Chaffins et al., 1995, p. 2.

Inequities, however small, can impact a work environment. In a meta-analysis of leadership effectiveness of males and females, Martell, Lane, and Emrich (1996) conducted a computer simulation of promotion practices at a hypothetical corporation to demonstrate the cumulative effects of small-scale bias. This model assumed a tiny bias favoring the promotion of men, which accounted for only 1% of the variability in promotion. After repeated promotions, the highest level in the hierarchy was 65% male. This demonstrates that operating at a systematic minute disadvantage has the potential for substantial long-term effects.

The dilemma faced by women was if they did not act or appear to be feminine enough they might be viewed as too masculine, which sometimes



raised the issue of homophobia. "And no matter how well they manage their sexuality and gender, women's sexuality was always available as a means of control by covert or overt behaviors" (Adler et al., 1993, p. 17). Women often feel, that to advance, they must "man up" (Willits, 2004).

The glass ceiling was a form of discrimination, which was a barrier so subtle that it was transparent, yet so strong that it prevents women from moving up the hierarchy (Chaffins et al., 1995). It is a term used to describe barriers that women confront as they approach the top of the corporate hierarchy (Feminist Research Center, 2001). "It was the invisible barrier to achievement, the point at which women watch young men . . . gain positions of power. . . . Whether this barrier was created by male assumptions of their right to advancement or female reticence and non-aggressive attitude remains moot" (Adler et al., 1993, pp.22-23). The glass ceiling was a "socially enacted process occurring through language, discourse, practices and interaction" (Buzzanell, 1995, p.1).

Sixty-one percent of the female respondents in the 2000 AASA Superintendent survey felt that "a glass ceiling existed in school management, which lessened their chances of being selected" (Glass, 2000, p. 3). While the women's movement and equity legislation may have positively influenced the attitudes of some individuals, it has not dramatically altered the norms and values that perpetuate the "glass ceiling" which limits career advancement for women in the superintendency (Glass, 2000, pp.17-18).

Title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1991 established a Glass Ceiling Commission. The 21-member bi-partisan commission was appointed by the first President Bush to conduct a study of “opportunities for, and artificial barriers to, the advancement of minority men and all women into management and decision-making positions in corporate America.” Using a number of processes to ensure gathering accurate and representative information the Commission held public hearings in five major cities across the U.S. The hearings involved a total of 126 employees and employers from a “broad spectrum” of businessmen and institutions who testified about their experiences and perceptions of the glass ceiling. In addition, the Commission supported 18 research papers, convened focus groups, surveyed 25 CEOs of white and minority owned businesses, and completed data runs and analyses from the U.S. Bureau of the Census. The confluence of the qualitative and quantitative research was clear. “A glass ceiling exists and . . . it operates substantially to exclude minorities and women from the top level of management” (Glass Ceiling Commission, 1992, p.7). The Commission separated three levels of barriers contained in the glass ceiling:

1. societal barriers which lie outside the direct control of business,
2. internal structural barriers with the direct control of business, and
3. governmental barriers, which influence the lack of consistency monitoring, inadequate reporting, and weakness in data collection.

The conclusions of the Commission reported that promotion practices based on balancing numbers in order to advance highly competent women or by admitting

token women met only surface needs. The Commission cited two problematic issues:

1. At the current rate of accession, it could take as long as 75-100 years for women to be truly represented at the top levels.
2. Despite affirmative action (which in itself denies that women have gained a position by means of their own merit) and despite the removal of discriminatory laws we have not come to terms with the deeply rooted misconceptions about the capability of women.

Six years later, the issues of the glass ceiling had not gone away. Quoting from the findings of the 1997 International Labor Organization meeting in Switzerland which included representatives from 20 countries, Wirth (1998) noted that these representatives agreed that social attitudes and cultural biases were identified as major factors in discrimination against women and preventing them from attaining higher-level jobs.

A comparison of pay between males and females having similar positions extends the idea of the glass ceiling. Eathington (2004), in a report entitled *Social and Economic Trends in Iowa: Exploring the Gender Gap in Earnings of Iowa's Workers* found the following:

The relative earnings of college-educated women fall sharply after age 30 and the decline continues with each age bracket, except for professional and scientific workers in their 50's. In general, these patterns would seem to reinforce the notion of a 'glass ceiling' that

limits the career advancement opportunities for women, even among highly educated women” (p. 4).

‘Within jobs men are still paid more than are women with comparable qualifications. This indicates that men’s economic advantages may persist despite occupational integration. Marriage and children negatively affect women’s earnings while positively affecting men’s earnings (Budig, 2002, p. 275).

Another exclusionary practice was that of choosing male candidates outside the school system. In 1995, for example, Seattle recruited an army general to head the school system and in 1999, the San Diego school board hired a former U.S. attorney for superintendent (*Dallas Morning News*). This type of hiring was attributed to the perspective that teachers nurture children and that men are the administrators who oversee the school family (Brunner, 2000a). Hiring outside candidates, seemingly to perpetuate male domination, obstructs women from gaining the superintendency. Tallerico and Tingley ((2001) pointed out the recent changes in several states’ policies of lowering the bar for noneducators’ entry into school administration as discriminatory against women. They cited the fact that business, military and government leaders are predominantly male while teachers and students in graduate leadership programs are predominantly female, so that the “two pronged” approach facilitates access for males and limits access for females (p.2).

For the glass ceiling to be broken, larger numbers of females must gain access to larger and wealthier districts (Alexander, 2002). An illustration of where this is not happening is in Illinois where half of the women superintendents were located in districts of less than 1,000 students (Angulo, 1995). In the 2002-2003 school year, Iowa had only two female superintendents serving districts with a population above 3,000 students.

The glass ceiling was one of the two primary causes for low numbers of women at the superintendency level (Glass, 2000). For purposes of further explanation regarding the implications of the glass ceiling, the material was divided into three parts: apprenticeship, pipeline, and Alice in Wonderland. Although all three of these divisions may not be evident in every work place, there was adequate evidence to justify their use (Roncse, 1991). Each level of the glass ceiling was affected by different criteria.

#### Apprenticeship

*The significant difference between the female superintendents' views that discriminatory practices exist and the male superintendents' majority views that discriminatory practices and barriers are not a factor was troubling. Unless these practices and barriers are addressed, increasing the numbers of women in the position of superintendent of schools will be extremely difficult. It is, after all, most often the male superintendents who are mentors for others aspiring and entering the position. And, if male*

*superintendents do not believe that women face discrimination and/or barriers that limit their administrative opportunities, they are less likely to understand the need for them to mentor and encourage women. (Glass et al., 2001, p. 89)*

The apprenticeship level of the glass ceiling entails dedicating long hours of work doing the bidding of others, contributing to the work of others without credit, and enduring a certain level of abuse, which may include sexual harassment. Ronce (1991) observed that it is defeating when an apprentice is viewed as low in status by fellow colleagues. This situation becomes daunting when combined with sexual harassment. Peer support and friendship along with commensurate job and personal survival skills play a significant role in helping people survive this level.

Breaking the glass ceiling requires organizational commitment and “men to take an active role as active partners to implement this change” (Northouse, 1997, p. 218). Studies indicate that it takes very little to turn a woman’s attention to administration, but that it does take “some overt act--however small--for most women to begin to think of becoming an administrator (Shakeshaft, 1999). Women candidates who had professional connections to a male sponsor, either consultant or superintendent, as part of their career path were more likely to access a superintendency (Maienza, 1986; Tallerico, 2000a).

The Pipeline

The second level of the glass ceiling—the pipeline—occurs at the post-apprenticeship state. Its existence was confirmed in a Department of Labor report in 1991. The quality of the pipeline experience was a key determiner for which candidates would pursue the third level (Glass Ceiling Commission, 1992, p. 15). Successful behavior at this level was different from that expected at the apprenticeship level. Women choose to move into administration because of administrative role models, their exposure to transformative leadership styles, and the endorsements and/or support they receive (Young & McLeod, 2001). Credentials and assertive behavior (including seeking out a mentor) are assets for survival (Lindsey, 1997). “An exposure to alternative leadership styles, whether through literature or an administrative role model often was enough for female educators with leadership proclivities to realize that an administrative career may be viable” (Young & McLeod, 2001, p. 469).

Being mentored was important because there are few formal provisions in the workplace for mentors to be assigned. Brunner (1996) noted the need for men to actively campaign in favor of gender diversity so that opportunities become available for women. The most powerful training and mobility structure for males was the sponsor/protégé relationship (Marshall, 1985; Northouse, 1997). There are some deterrents to opposite-genders mentoring. The relationships are often not sustained in the apprehension that they would be construed as non-professional in nature (Holving & Sherida, 2003; Marshall 1985). When women have women as mentors they have the greatest chance of

reaching the highest reporting levels of an organization (Galinsky, Salmond, & Bond, 2002).

Women, however can survive in a non-nurturing environment that is sometimes called the chilly climate (Eagly, Makhyani, & Klonsky, 1992). The chilly climate consists of the numerous small inequities, that, when aggregated, create a pervasive negative work environment for women, one that was stressful and less rewarding. The cumulative effect results in the lesser inequities causing harm to the professional life of women and the quality of their achievement (Roman & Eyre, 1997; Sandler, Silverberg, & Hall, 1996; Smith, 1997).

The opportunity for constructive feedback was present in most mentor relationships, which often are outside the supervisor/employee situation (Healy & Welchert, 1990). Because the superintendency was a self-selected profession, mentorships are particularly important in communicating the practical aspects of the job. Effective mentoring includes advice on the logistical aspects of a position along with communicating and connecting on an emotional level with the mentee (Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000). "A great deal of professional knowledge was best transferred in a mentoring relationship, rather than in a university classroom or in an in-service workshop" (Glass et al., 2001, p. 50).

Nearly all superintendents--men and women--consider themselves mentors but more women than men report serving as mentors. In the 2000 AASA superintendent study, 58.5% indicated they were assisted by a mentor in their own career development with significantly more superintendents in larger districts



having served as mentors than superintendents from very-small to small districts. Female superintendents in the sample more often had mentors than did male superintendents (Glass, 2000, p. 91), yet, many exemplary women leaders have solitarily created a path and are just now discovering the concomitant gains of mentoring others” (Hill & Ragland, 1995, p.13).

In the 2000 AASA national study of superintendents, the two most widely cited reasons for the small number of women in the superintendency were that women were discouraged from preparing for the superintendency and that school boards would not hire them. Although the study noted that these reasons were not supported with substantive data, the mentoring system was clearly “less developed” than it was for men. “This was important since mentors many times act as go-betweens among superintendent candidates and school board. Mentors also provided in-district mobility opportunities for women aspiring to the superintendency” (Glass, 2000, p. 3).

Four related obstacles are apparent for women seeking administrative positions: absence of role models, lack of support and encouragement from others, lack of internal and external sponsorship, and lack of a supporting network (Brown & Merchant, 1993, p. 88). The issues of care, connectedness, relationships, support, and self-esteem all point to a need for support organizations (Irby & Brown, 1998). Young and McLeod (2001, p. 1) pointed to the increase in women occupying leadership positions over the past decade,

noting however, that it was still unusual for women to lead at the secondary or district level. Carlson and Schmuck (1981) observed the following:

Factors that influence the structural career in education include visibility of the occupation its appropriateness, its plausibility as a choice, the counseling, encouragement and sponsorship, the opportunity to perform, the quality of performance, the recognition of performance, the motivation to fulfill formal requirements, the needed socialization, gaining entrance, and the sequence of positions. The three important personal contingencies are perceived opportunities, competence, and aspirations. (p. 119)

Upward mobility was easier for secondary level teachers than it was for elementary teachers. Men are twice as likely as women to be pre-selected for the position of secondary school principal. Thus positioning, in and of itself, limits access to the superintendency by women. Marshall (1985, p.133) observed:

The career paths, models of leadership, formal and informal training and job requirements, the selection systems, and the age norms for educational administrative careers have been based on the assumptions that men will fill higher positions. Aspiring women, having no power to challenge or change requirements must find ways to convince men in power positions that their ascribed handicaps are unimportant.

Women must strive to develop impressive resumes and, because this requires time, it consequently becomes an obstacle to job entry and also job mobility. To obtain administrative jobs, women submitted more applications, had more interviews, and searched longer than men. Female incumbent superintendents made much greater efforts than males, using 13 different search strategies whereas men used only 7 (Paven & McKee, 1988). More recent research has noted that women are requiring less time to find a position (Glass et al., 2001).

Women use more strategies to overcome obstacles to administrative advancement than do men. Incumbent aspirants, and/or those with doctoral degrees submitted more applications and used a wider variety of employment strategies than other female aspirants. Women spend much more time in the classroom than do most men before they become superintendents; however, the expectation was that a superintendent candidate should not have spent too many years in the classroom because it might cause the candidate to “think like a teacher. “This particular norm, all by itself can create a barrier for women candidates. When any norm is this strong, the public begins to believe in it as the way things should be” (Paven & McKee, 1988, p. 30).

#### Alice in Wonderland

The third level of the glass ceiling was called “Alice in Wonderland” because there are so few women occupying positions at this level. These are the women who head large school systems. Women occupying these positions are

therefore highly visible. Isolation and being judged by different standards than men was a common experience for women at this level. Typical workers sabotage sex-atypical workers (Cockburn, 1991). Networking inside and outside the workplace was vitally important for survival at this level. Women have been found to leave positions of leadership at higher rates. Factors such as disagreement with institutional decisions, lack of mentoring, and feelings of isolation contribute to this erosion (Cockburn, 1991).

### The Glass Escalator

*There was a need for an improved, concerted effort focusing on giving alternative options to assist in advancement endeavors.*

*(Byrd-Blake, 2004, p. 9)*

“Token women who progress in the organization are older, have technical expertise, skilled at managing their public impression, and receive little to no credit” (Yeakey et al., 1986, p. 134). It has been observed that men as tokens in the educational system advance more quickly and successfully than do women who are tokens. Termed “the glass escalator,” Williams (1992) noted that men employed in predominantly female work are encouraged to advance into positions of authority. Cognard-Black (2004) corroborated this observation stating “There does appear to be a glass escalator upward for token men who teach. They benefit in one real important way from their status as men. They are

significantly more likely to advance upward into prominent school administrative positions” (p. 133). He further observes:

While token workers suffer some forms of disadvantage by virtue of the contextual minority status, that disadvantage was ameliorated when incumbents enjoy a privileged master status such as men do, Under this condition token workers may be singled out for special treatment, better monetary and non--monetary rewards, and better opportunities for career advancement. (p. 134)

### The Glass Cliff

Recent research also shows that female candidates are more likely to be hired for superintendency in troubled urban districts than in other places (Vail, 1999). The greatest gains for women in the superintendency over the past decade were in suburban/urban districts serving 3,000-24,999 students. The number of female superintendents in these districts nearly tripled. In addition 71% of female superintendents responded that they were working under their first contract (Glass et al., 2001).

The Council of the Great City Schools is a coalition of 64 of the nation’s largest urban public school systems. Criteria for being a member of the Council is that a school must be located in a city with a population of over 250,000 and have an enrollment of over 35,000 students. Districts with general urban characteristics located in the largest city of any state are also eligible for membership, regardless of their size (Council of the

Great City Schools, 2005). A year 2000 survey conducted by the Great City Schools revealed that 30% of the superintendents in large urban districts were female (Gates, Ringel, Santibanez, Ross, & Chung, 2003).

A concept that is presently being researched represents an extension of the glass ceiling.

Extending the metaphor of the glass ceiling and the glass elevator, we argue that such women are more likely than men to find themselves on a 'glass cliff,' such that their positions of leadership are associated with great risk and in an increased possibility of failure. If and when that failure occurs, it was then women (rather than men) who are singled out for criticism and blame. (Ryan & Haslam, 2005, p. 4)

These researchers point out that women are often appointed to positions in which there already exists a history of poor performance leading up to their appointment and that these positions of leadership are "more risky and precarious than those in which men found themselves" (p. 13).

Although research has not pursued this question, it was interesting to look at the statistics of the Great City Schools, those educational institutions that face the greatest challenges within the United States. Twenty-three percent of the Great City Schools superintendents were women. This was approximately 10 percentage points above the national rate for women superintendents. Approximately 31% of the Great City Schools superintendents have been in

office for one year or less which was an increase from 22% in 2001. Only 15% of Great City School superintendents had five or more years of experience in their current positions in 2003. This was a decrease from 20% in 1997. These statistics demonstrate that a glass cliff was a viable concern in the American education system and warrants further study.

### Summary

Research has shown that operating at a systematic minute disadvantage has the potential for substantial long-term effects. The glass ceiling is a term used to describe barriers that women confront as they approach the top of a system hierarchy. Sixty-one percent of the female respondents in the 2000 AASA survey reported they felt a glass ceiling existed in education. The glass ceiling not only serves to prevent those inside the system from advancing, the system also draws leaders from outside the organization. The glass ceiling is made up of three parts: apprenticeship, pipeline and Alice in Wonderland. The apprenticeship level requires long hours of work and endurance of being “on the bottom”. Intervention by someone higher within the organization has proved significant at this level.

The pipeline is the experience phase in which people acquire the skills to advance. Mentors are critical at this stage. Alice in Wonderland is the top level of the glass ceiling and here women face isolation and disagreement with institutional decisions. Women leave these positions at higher rates than do men. Two corollary concepts to the glass ceiling are the glass escalator and the glass

cliff. The glass escalator is a documented situation in which men are promoted more rapidly through the different levels than are women. The glass cliff is a situation in which women are set up in impossible situations, and therefore fail. This could be related to the high incidence of women being accepted at higher rates to lead the very challenging big city school districts.

### **Accessing the Superintendency**

*Accessing the superintendency is influenced by (a) gatekeeping decisions based on power-holders' personal criteria, (b) the routine practices that characterize headhunting for superintendents, (c) norms embedded in the educational administration profession, and (d) the dominant ideologies and socio-cultural values of American society. (Tallerico, 2000b, p. 21)*

*In the 2000 AASA Superintendent Survey, 33.7% of women indicated that they believed that boards of education discriminate against their perceived ability to act as strong managers. (Glass et al., 2000,p.88)*



*School boards must be diligent about maintaining equitable work environments and leadership opportunities for all employees. When social justice and equity are modeled by the school leadership on a consistent basis, the potential exists not only to enrich the professional opportunities for female leaders, but more importantly, to enrich learning opportunities for the children that are served.*

(Tillman & Cochran, 2000, as cited in Byrd-Blake, 2004, p.10)

### Location

Even though approximately two-thirds of the nation's schools are elementary, very few teachers have the pipeline opportunities to advance in line positions that secondary teachers do. Elementary teachers must "jump" from the classroom to the principalship (Glass, 2000). Pavan and McKee (1988) noted that male career paths were more direct than were females' paths. It was found that more women followed a staff path versus a line path than did men to access the assistant superintendency. Women who enter the field of education administration are intricately related to their career commitments, positional goals, and leadership orientations (Young & McLeod, 2001).

What was known about the location of female administrators on a national level was that they were usually employed in large districts in metropolitan areas because there are more job opportunities for place-bound women, there are more administrative positions in support and staff areas, and there are simply

more vacancies (Schmuck & Wyant, 1981, p. 81). Women are more likely to be hired as internal candidates as opposed to having to apply as external candidates (Schmuck & Wyant, 1981). Further observations about this portrait of a typical superintendent reinforce one another. In some cases, the prospect of relocating might create a hardship for female superintendents in their 40s or 50s who have husbands employed in local communities and children in school who are not willing to relocate (Glass et al., 2001). Hudson (1994) also noted that the informal contacts used by women and minorities operated in more restricted geographical areas, thus they were more place bound.

### Summary

On a national level female administrators are usually employed in larger districts because there are more job opportunities for place-bound women. Because of their closer connection to the family, causes women to be more place bound than men. Women are more likely to achieve advancement through internal opportunities than by seeking jobs in other locations away from their homes.

### Career Route

In order to understand the obstacles women confront in accessing the position of superintendent, it was necessary to describe the career routes taken. "The three most common ways for women to enter school administration are through specialist positions, supervisory posts and elementary principalships" (Shakeshaft, 1991). Although principals and supervisors may be on the same

level in the administrative hierarchy, she alluded to a somewhat subtle difference between the principalship as legitimized through legal authority, and supervisory positions, which are legitimized through the quality of technical knowledge.

Many women stop career movement at the position of elementary principal because of the satisfaction they receive from that position.

Women are less likely to follow the track of teacher and principal before becoming a superintendent. After the emergence of categorical programs in the 1960s many teachers were able to leave the classroom and become coordinators in remedial or special education. These programs, in particular, provided entry-level positions for female administrators. In some cases, however, they created a disadvantage for prospective administrators because these positions generally do not provide “line” or employee supervision experience and evaluation of instructional staff. In 2000 only 13.7% of superintendents indicated this to be their first administrative role. (Glass et al., 2001, pp. 35-36)

Supervisory positions are not considered as strong a prerequisite for the superintendency as are line positions. While some women prefer to remain at this level because of job satisfaction, those who did not, found that it was much more difficult to access the administrative hierarchy than had they chosen a line position. “Many schools have more than one vice-principal; men generally held vice-principalships in charge of discipline, a ‘masculine’ function, while women

were more likely to be assigned responsibilities for curriculum, a 'feminine' function" (Schmuck & Wyant, 1981 p. 78). "Despite the overwhelming amount of research that shows that women are better than men at maintaining discipline, the research has had no impact on dispelling the misperception that men are better than women in administrative positions" (Shakeshaft, 1991, p. 70). "Women are less likely to have *direct* supervisory responsibilities as a *major* part of their jobs" (Bond, Thompson, Galinsky, & Prottas, 2002, p. 12).

### Summary

A staff position is defined as overseeing programs, for example, a curriculum director is considered as a staff position. A line position is defined as supervising people; for example, principals or athletic directors are considered as line positions. Women are more likely to follow a staff path and men are more likely to follow a line path. Staff positions are not considered as strong a prerequisite for the superintendency as are line positions.

### Advantages of the Line

*The typical career track of superintendents has not changed appreciably over the past decade. Current data point to two career paths. The most common (48.5%) was from teacher to assistant principal or principal to central office administrator to superintendent. The second most prevalent path (31.2%) was from teacher to assistant principal or principal to superintendent. The second pattern appears to be most common in very small districts*

*with fewer than 300 students and suburban rural districts with fewer than 2,999 students. That trend was understandable given that these districts tend to have fewer professional central office positions that may serve as stepping-stones to the superintendency. (Glass et al., 2001, p. 20)*

Accessing the superintendency can be done most easily through line positions, that is, following a prescribed course of jobs, which include supervising other people (Frase, English, & Posten, 2000). Beginning with teaching, the progression seems more accessible for secondary teachers because there are intervening jobs that may be pursued en route. These jobs would include department chair, coaching and athletic director, which was a typical pipeline toward an assistant principalship, and the high school principalship. Forty-six percent of the superintendents in the 2000 AASA Survey indicated they have been high school principals. Fifty-nine percent indicated that they have been high school teachers (Glass et al., 2001).

Line positions, such as athletic director and secondary principals, usually tend to lead more directly to superintendency. Athletic directors and coaches are also thought to be better disciplinarians; however there was

no evidence to support this conclusion but this belief has been used repeatedly to justify hiring a man and not a woman. [The] process of demystification reveals the effects that follow from the use of power in the 'male' culture. It is this alienation that traps both the

powerful and powerless in hegemonic structures that are cruelly dehumanizing. (Moglen, 1983, p. 133)

Another male administrative line advantage was coaching experience. "Coaching was almost a mandatory experience" (Glass et al., 2001, p. 38). Surveys covering the years 1987-88, 1990-91, and 1993-94 revealed that more than 33% of the male principals each year had coaching experience, while only 4 to 6% of women had been coaches (Holloway, 2000). Even with the passage of Title IX, assuring sports opportunities for women, Blount noted that when money was "attached to the positions for girls' coaches, men quickly took these roles and pushed women out in the process" (p. 142).

"Today most secondary schools sponsor at least six interscholastic sports for both boys and girls, which provide at least 12 head coaching jobs" (Glass, 2000, p. 2). "Fifty-eight percent of respondents on the AASA survey indicated that they had experience in coaching, but very few were former physical education teachers. As most superintendents are former teachers in secondary or middle schools, where a number of coaching positions are available, it was not surprising that many have had coaching experience" (Glass et al., 2001, p. v).

### Summary

Line positions such as athletic director and secondary principal usually tend to lead more directly to the superintendency. Although there is no research to support the idea that males are better disciplinarians than women, the belief

still exists. Opportunities are greater for secondary teachers to become department chairpersons or coaches.

### The Sports Connection

Females face another sports factor that limits accessibility to the superintendency. A traditional networking for administrators centers on golf, which is a sport more popular with men than with women (Hyle, 1991). Many professional administrative meetings and workshops center around golf. It was no wonder that golf has been cited as a gatekeeper in the area of school administration (Archer, 2003). The probability of females integrating the all-male peer group was limited. There are two ways that have seemed to be successful: pretending to have male qualities or acquiescing to the concept of the servant female. Anderson (1990) elaborates on this thought by noting that women attend professional conferences at a higher rate than do men so “when the population of the meeting changes, change the meeting location (p. 18).

### Summary

Traditionally golf outings have created an opportunity for networking. Professional meetings often center on golf. Even when women golf, being able to integrate the closed networks that have traditionally formed at these meetings is unlikely.

### Elementary Versus Secondary Experience

More than half of the superintendents in the 2000 AASA survey came from a secondary background. "This may have resulted in a disadvantage to women aspiring to be superintendents, since women, who have traditionally dominated elementary teaching, have had fewer opportunities for the type of 'entry level' administrative positions available at the secondary level" (Glass et al., 2001, p. iv). "Over half of the 2,000 respondents (58.9%) have coaching experience with an even greater percentage in smaller school districts" (p. 38). Guidance counseling, once considered a stepping-stone into administration, is not considered so anymore (Shakeshaft, 1991). "Because so many superintendents are former secondary teachers, the position of department chair may be considered a "quasi" administrative role and was often the first stepping-stone to the superintendency" (Glass et al., 2001, p. 36).

The superintendency has been historically dominated by former secondary level teachers. Apparently teachers of older students in a departmentalized type of instructional environment not only are more familiar with the greater degree of bureaucracy in secondary schools, but also may find administration more alluring than elementary school teachers. Nearly 50% of superintendents indicated they had their first administrative position in a junior or senior high school. Only 26% of the superintendents indicated that



their first teaching assignment was in the elementary grades.

(Glass et al., 2001, p. 34)

Few elementary teachers have opportunities for head coaching assignments. "There are usually no department chair positions and very few assistant principalships" (Glass et al., 2001, p. 85). "What this suggests is that high school and middle school teachers have many more entry points for a move into administration and first step toward the superintendency" (Glass, 2000, p. 2). Principalships, particularly those of the high school, and coaching place high demands on the personal lives of those who occupy those positions. This has also posed a problem for women who often view their primary role as nurturer of the family.

### Summary

Over half of the AASA (2000) superintendents listed secondary experience. Women are more concentrated in elementary education where there are fewer opportunities for coaching or assistant principal positions. Line positions, aside from those in elementary schools, place high demands on time outside of school, which has posed a problem for women who view their primary responsibility as caretaker of the family. Some of these issues are further complicated by the actual superintendent selection process.

### **School Boards and the Selection Process**

*Think manager, think male.* (Ryan & Haslam, 2005, p. 5)

*Until recently most board members and even educators considered the superintendency the province of males. This is changing, but not to a significant degree. (Glass et al., 2001, p. 39)*

*Men do not view the following factors as hindrances to women entering the superintendency: lack of recruiting by boards of education, opportunities to gain professional experience, professional networks, likelihood of a glass ceiling to career advancement. Female superintendents, on the other hand, see these as important. (Glass et al., 2001, p. 16)*

*Women tend to be hired by school boards that have a higher status, are more cosmopolitan (assuming that suburban and urban districts represents a more cosmopolitan group than rural districts) and are in contexts where females have influence in general community matters. (Marrietti & Stout, 1994, p. 376)*

*Accessing the superintendency is different. School board members are directly and intensely involved. The search and selection process can take 8 to 18 months. The superintendency is the one position for which school boards frequently engage the services of*

*outside facilitators. . . . All in all, a different mix of power holders and procurers come into play, compared to access other teaching and leadership positions.* (Tallerico, 2000a, p. 1)

External obstacles such as recruitment, selection evaluation, and reward systems work well as norms and expectations in most school districts to “ensure that women are less likely than men to serve in leadership positions” (Young & McLeod, 2001, p. 464). Institutional obstacles create a structure in which it becomes very difficult for aspiring women to advance their careers. Getting from one state of the glass ceiling to another requires good job reviews. As early as the 1960s, the indication was that the evaluation process was more difficult for females than for males in the educational sector (Merton, 1968). “Theory and research on shifting standards indicate that evaluations of women are fraught with difficulty” (Fouad et al., 2000, p. 19).

Judgments and ratings are influenced by gender schemas even when objective characteristics such as height, are being evaluated (Biernat, Manis, & Nelson, 1991). Eagly (1992) noted that female leaders’ evaluations were only slightly more negative than those of male leaders, however she made the following four observations:

1. In settings where men greatly outnumbered women in leadership roles, women were evaluated more negatively.
2. Women were evaluated more negatively by male evaluators.

3. Women who lead in high male environments tend to be less democratic and more autocratic.
4. Women are given negative evaluations for a male-associated autocratic leadership style, while men are not devalued for adapting a more feminine-preferred democratic style of leadership.

Glass (2000) notes that school boards are reluctant to hire women superintendents. According to the last two 10-year studies by the AASA, most school board members are male. Despite a national trend toward a transformation of the gender balance toward more female representation (Glass et al., 2001; Kowalski & Strouder, 1999), Iowa School Board membership reflects a slight down trend over the past six years in female board membership (Appendix E).

Superintendent searches are conducted in a number of different ways. The school board may undertake to manage the search by itself. This was one of the least-used search techniques and would characteristically take place in the smallest districts, usually as a cost-saving measure. School board self-searches may also be used when there was a strong internal candidate with whom the board would be satisfied. Tallerico (2000a), for example, reported that only 5% of the boards in New York State have conducted searches themselves within the last five years.

Typically school boards engage an agent or agency to help with the search. The most commonly used agency was a professional consultant or

headhunter. These individuals or firms help boards attract and select the district's new school superintendent (Tallerico, 2000b, p.18). This search firm is usually comprised of former superintendents, administrators, and university professors who maintain a pool of candidates (Tallerico, 2000b). Superintendents are often employed because their knowledge and skill with the existing job networks make them desirable members of a recruiting firm. Women's access to these networks was often limited; however, these informal networks are where male peers are groomed for administrative positions (Tallerico, as quoted in Vail, 1999).

### Summary

School boards are more reluctant to hire female superintendents. Typically boards engage a search consultant to conduct the search for the superintendent. Many search consultants are former superintendents. These search consultants rely on a pool of candidates from which to draw their suggestions for the board. Part of that pool is drawn from networks. Networks can also be helpful in filling out applications. Women's access to these networks is often limited; therefore their access to search consultants may also be limited.

### Application Process

There are two ways to become an applicant, either by submitting a formal application, or by being recruited by the consultant firm. Applying for and being selected as a candidate for superintendency is a demanding challenge for everyone involved including males, females, consultants, and school boards. The search and selection process for determining the new superintendent is one of

the most important responsibilities of any school board (Chion-Kenney, 1994; Tallerico 2000a). Tallerico elaborated the process in the following way: recruiting, application, culling, interviewing, reference and background checking, selection, and contract negotiations are all included in the selection process.

School boards are directly and intensely involved with a different mix of power holders and procedures as compared to accessing other teaching or leadership positions in education. The process may begin as much as a year in advance, sometimes even longer, in which case the school board names an interim superintendent for a year. The interim position provides more time to articulate job expectations and search the field of candidates. Larger districts often conduct a national search, while middle to small sized districts advertise statewide, or sometimes in a limited range outside the state borders.

Candidates are usually asked to respond to a series of three to five general questions about school situations, which are then used as part of the screening process. Reference and background checks are conducted. Consultants are expected to “know” the district and to find qualified candidates that would be a good match with that district. In short, consultants are the gatekeepers to the process (Chase & Bell, 1994; Tallerico, 2000a).

It was reported that although boards could be pro-active about bringing women into the interview process, there was still hesitancy for boards to risk hiring a woman (Angulo, 1995; Grewal, 2002). Reasons cited by female candidates that disadvantage them with boards included a concern on the part of

the school board that a female could handle finances or deal with unions (Angulo, 1995). Some boards question women's leadership styles. Search firms do not promote women to boards of education like they could (Tallerico, 2000a). Although discrimination may be unconscious and unexamined, it still exists. One search consultant described a situation in which the school board explicitly asked him not to bring them any women candidates to which he responded that he would pretend he did not hear their request (Chion-Kenney, 1994).

As gatekeepers to the superintendency, consultants' acceptance of women in positions of power was critical to efforts to increase women's representation among educational leaders (Chase & Bell, 1994). Shakeshaft (cited in Chion-Kenney, 1994, p. 9) alluded to the "fake screen" of discriminating, not by holding women to a higher standard, but by holding men to a lower one. Chion-Kenney (1994) noted that the good old boy network was still functioning, citing the 1992 AASA superintendent survey, in which four times as many female superintendents listed gender discrimination as a hiring concern as did male superintendents. Glass et al. (2001, p. vii) reported that, according to the AASA survey,

Half of male superintendents felt an 'old boy/girl' network helped them to gain a superintendency position. Three quarters of female superintendents felt the networking helped in getting a position. Most female superintendents think that gender barriers exist. Most men feel they do, as well, but to a limited extent.

Approximately 40% of respondents on the AASA 2000 survey attributed their hiring to personal characteristics. Although this is decreasing, superintendents in small districts cite personal characteristics as the reason they were hired, perhaps because of the importance the superintendent position holds in a small community (Glass et al., 2001). Most districts in Iowa qualify as smaller districts by the AASA survey standards.

Discrimination during the selection process may play out by:

1. Bias, which implies that a district may have tried a woman, but it did not work out and therefore the failure was attributed to the gender instead of the individual.
2. Chauvinism in which the school board believes that the job was just too difficult for a woman to handle.
3. Delimiters in which there was a belief that good candidates must have superintendent experience or have been a high school principal in a large district, which very often rule out many female candidates. The consultants have the power to contradict these biases (Chion-Kenney 1994, p 15).

### Summary

The application process is concerned with more than simply filling out an application. It includes building contacts in a supporting (often “good old boy”) network in order to be considered as a viable candidate. School boards and consultants are the gatekeepers of the process. Both could do more to



encourage and increase the number of women in the superintendency. School boards often have acculturated notions about feminine capabilities. Because there are so many perceptions involved the application process is open to discriminatory practices that continue in the recruiting process.

### Recruiting Process

Although the school board makes the final decision as to whom they choose as superintendent, the consultant has considerable power in the process. The consultant has the job of eliminating almost 90% of the applicants to bring the four to five finalists to the board. Research demonstrates that “school boards continue to depend on search consultants and afford them ample power and authority particularly in screening and winnowing parts of the selections process” (Tallerico, 2000a, p. 141). Tallerico (2000b) observed that recruiters do not seem to see a contradiction between providing support for female candidates and acquiescing to systems and ideologies that perpetuate the male predominance in the superintendency.

The role of the consultant is as procurer and screener of the candidates. Maienza (1986) separated gatekeepers into three categories (a) university professors in the educational administrative course area have a strong awareness of viable candidates, (b) professional organizations (often the heart of good old boy networks) and, (c) consultant sponsorship. Maienza cited this as strong evidence that women face precarious entry to the superintendency, since all of these areas have traditionally been male bastions. Search firms can be pro-

active in including women in the search process, particularly at the semifinal level, but then the representation drops off at the finalist level and in the selection of the superintendent. Women often have to participate in more interviews in order to locate a job than do men (Brunner, 1995).

Recruiters have a candidate resource pool, whom they promote (Angulo, 1995). Recruiters serve as one of two main gatekeepers in the selection of the superintendent. Entrance into the pool of candidates was accomplished through networking, direct contact with a recruiter, or specific school board request.

Aspiring women who are linked to university professors, superintendent networks, and school board networks are more likely to learn about superintendent vacancies and district circumstances (Glass, 2000, p. 18).

Results of the 2000 AASA survey indicated that “52.5% of the respondents believe an old boy/girl network exists. Many respondents undoubtedly think that the individuals working for superintendent search firms or state school boards associations are part of an informal network” (Glass et al., 2001, p. 39).

Research supports the notion that female administrators perceive they are denied access to power groups that make important decisions (Gupton & Appelt-Slick, 1995). In a study of 175 female administrators, Byrd-Blake (2004) found that a majority of the respondents reported never utilizing a new-girl network, the counterpart of the old-boy network.

The system of power brokering and influence to access the superintendency are still in play today (Hansot & Tyack, 1982). In their 1994

study, Chase and Bell found that less than 40% of the consultants spoke about their outreach to women and their involvement with women's organizations to encourage women to apply for the superintendency. Noting a 3% increase in the number of females placed by professional search firms, Glass concluded that these firms "are more likely to have managed searches that result in the hiring of female superintendents." Local school boards, he observed, tend to hire more men than women (Glass et al., 2001, p. 87).

The network for males remains strong. Many candidates indicated that they were invited to apply for a position before the vacancy was announced publicly or advertised (Tallerico, 2000a). The salience of networks as an important determiner in accessing the superintendency was substantiated by numerous researchers (Grogan, 1996, Hudson, 1994, Tallerico, 2000a). Glass et al. (2001) indicated that about half the male superintendents in the 2000 AASA study felt an old boy/girl network had aided them in gaining their position; however, three-quarters of female superintendents felt that networking was significant in gaining a position. It was not clear from the study as to whether the networking actually helped women to secure their positions.

### Summary

The search consultant plays a key role in determining who is chosen for the final candidates for the superintendent position. These search consultants maintain a pool of candidates whom they promote. The old/boy/old girl network

plays an important role in this process. This network still favors males and serves to help to replicate the existing system.

#### Replication of the Existing System

*The failure to see the different reality of women's lives and to hear the differences in their voices stems, in part, from the assumption that there is a single mode of social experience and interpretation.*

(Gilligan, 1993, p. 173)

*High authoritarian men maintain particularly unfavorable attitudes toward women.* (Haddock & Zanna, 1994, p. 50)

Tallerico (2000a) called the superintendent hiring process “fuzzy” (p. 106). She cited how “chemistry and personality” are part of either the invited or uninvited process on the part of the board, calling the whole process “subjective, unwritten, personality/fit criteria” (p. 106). She noted that the subjectivities of this process were “more likely to favor male rather than female candidates.” She stated that such biases, either subconscious or unconscious were more likely to disadvantage women because they were perceived as the “others” in relation to the predominantly white male headhunters and school board members who screen the candidates. She continued, “These analyses are supported by both social-psychological and organizational research that demonstrates a human affinity for interaction with those most like ourselves” (p. 107). Tallerico further

points out that her observations are substantiated by other researchers, one of whom called the process of replicating the demographic similarity of an organization “homosocial reproduction” (Kanter, 1993; Marietti & Stout, 1994). “Even well meaning decision makers often subtly advantage people like themselves” (Linn, 1998, p.16).

### Summary

The superintendent hiring process has been termed fuzzy. It is vulnerable to subjective unwritten criteria that are biased against women. Research supports the idea that systems try to replicate themselves, which is called homosocial reproduction. Given that the system is built on a white male value system, women become disadvantaged. This points toward the need to examine the open and the subtle agendas for selecting finalists for the position of superintendent.

### Open Agenda; Subtle Agenda

*A complex mix of unwritten selection criteria . . . manifest themselves behind the scenes, in the private conversations and interviews critical to applicants' s advancement in recruitment and selection processes. These unwritten rules involve headhunters' and school board members' (a) defining quality in terms of hierarchies of particular job titles, (b) stereotyping by gender, (c) complacency about acting affirmatively, and (d) hyper-valuing*

*feelings of comfort and interpersonal chemistry with the successful candidate.* (Tallerico, 2000b, p. 37)

The selection process operates on both an open agenda and a subtle agenda. It is possible to infer that the questioning process and the screening process could be manipulated. The strategies that women use to deal with this dilemma include their style of dressing, communication skills, relationships with others, and blending in (Adler et al, 1993; Brunner, 1996).

Reference checking can also be nuanced. For example, Tallerico (2000a) referred to the power of passively promoting a candidate by a referral. Although a “no” answer to a question would eliminate a candidate, a “maybe” or silence in response to a referral question might also be damaging. Tallerico summed up her concerns about the referral and interview process by noting that there was an apparent disconnect between competent leadership skills and interview skills. Inherent in this rationale was the belief that a past track record was a better predictor of job performance than was the solo performance in a job interview. It also addressed the need for multiple data sources which, when combined, should produce a reliable representation of the applicant, which again underscored the importance of headhunters (p. 40).

Tallerico suggested that gender, race, and ethnicity are relevant considerations in our society. She cites the “enduring numerical predominance of Caucasian males in educational leadership” as a strong argument to support her

contention. She contends that not recognizing them as factors in job decisions “perpetuates the status quo—which is inequitable in many economic, social, educational and political aspects of American life” (p. 89). Blount (1998) corroborated this observation by noting that school boards tended to appoint people similar to themselves: White Protestant males (p. 68). Tallerico’s suggestion is also supported by critical theory, which states that many of the institutions and structures that organized our lives function to preserve an unequal and unjust social and political relationships (Martusewicz & Reynolds, 1994, p. 6).

There has been concern that recruitment of minorities, including women, was done to avoid a politically incorrect all-white male slate of semifinalists (Tallerico, 2000a). Without casting aspersions on this practice, it was also necessary to observe, “Tokenism in any form is sophisticated bigotry” (Thomas, 1986, p. 91).

### Summary

The school system is structured to ensure that women are less likely than men to serve in leadership positions (Young & McLeod, 2001). There are a number of ways the selection process can be nuanced and manipulated:

- School boards typically hire a professional search consultant to manage the hiring process.
- School boards tend to appoint people similar to themselves to the superintendent position.

It is an unresolved question as to whether the women who are finalists are tokens or true candidates. Research findings note that women are evaluated negatively in traditional male settings even if they exhibit “masculine” leadership characteristics. The interview process is one of the key elements in hiring a new superintendent.

### Interview Process

*Maleness signifies to board members shared language and experience, predictability, connection with the power structure and leadership that satisfies stereotyped preferences. (Bell, 1988, p. 50)*

The search consultant's role can be pervasive in the search process. The consultant wields a great deal of power over the selection process through these activities. Search firms who are trying to establish themselves are less apt to take the risk of advocating for women (Chion-Kenney, 1994). In addition, the consultant often either authors, or helps the school board author, the interview questions and is present during the interviews. Some consultants prompt candidates to add more to an answer, and other consultants remain silent. Again, this could be seen as a way to influence the board's decision. The consultant was also usually present during the closed session when the school board deliberates the decision and determines the provisions of the contract, including



the salary. The consultant may take an active role in this process, or simply be a watchdog to ensure that proceedings and contracts remain legal.

On average about 40 applicants are screened for a typical superintendent vacancy (O'Connell, 1995). Usually a school board requests either four or five finalists to be interviewed. Once the list of finalists is selected, school boards may do the interviewing and hiring by themselves as a group, or they may enlist focus groups to reach consensus as to the desirable characteristics for a superintendent.

The interview itself can be a nebulous experience. Men have dominated the superintendency for so long that they've defined the position. Shakeshaft (1991) states that it was the "ideology of patriarchy resulting in an androcentric society that explains why men, and not women, occupy the formal leadership positions in school and society (p. 95). For women, confronting the issue of gender can have dubious effect: either being viewed as proactive or on the other hand a red flag that gender was an issue with that candidate.

The texts, conventions, writings and professional activities that construct our knowing and understanding of leadership come from an embedded privileged perspective which largely ignores issues of status, gender, and race and insidiously perpetuates a view of leadership that discourages diversity and equity. (Gosetti & Rusch, 1995, p. 12)

Earlier in this review, gendered communication styles were compared. In the interview process, these differences can negatively impact females. There are hidden assumptions about gender that remain embedded in cultural discourse that "invisibly and systematically reproduce male power in generation after generation" (p. 5). Androcentism, which "transforms male-female difference into female disadvantage is a barrier which must be abolished" (Bem, 1993, p. 31).

Communication patterns can disqualify a woman who is being interviewed by a majority of men. Tannen (1990) noted the difference in male and female communication styles can lend itself to misunderstanding and "culture clashes" on the part of male school board members. Carli (1990) identified tentative speech patterns characterized by the frequent use of disclaimers, hedges, and tag questions enforced the perception that women are less knowledgeable and competent. Men react negatively to women with a "high task style" which was characterized by a "rapid rate of speech, a firm tone of voice, moderate voice volume, few hesitations, an upright posture, calm hand gestures, and a moderately high amount of eye contact" (Carli, LaFleur, & Loeber, 1995, p. 1034). Elgin (1987) disputed the difference between gendered speech, attributing it instead to the speech patterns of the dominant and the speech patterns of subordinates. Since women are most often in subordinate positions, their speech was labeled typically female.

The scrutiny to which female applicants are subjected can be much stronger than for males. Women are judged more critically on their attire. Attractiveness draws attention to a person's gender and therefore helps men appear more competent, but makes women appear less competent (Heilman & Stopeck, 1985). Tallerico (2000a, p. 104) quoted the following veteran school board member to illustrate this point.

I think women applicants have to be really careful about dress.

Besides the conservative interview suits—because both women and men should wear those—I hear the women criticized for the makeup, the size of the purse, the accessories, the hairdo, how much grey was in her hair, the height of the heels, the length of the skirt, the color of the fingernails. We even had a woman candidate wear diamond earrings! Diamond earrings are completely inappropriate!

These “lenses of gender” are imbedded in virtually all male dominated societies and shape things like access to jobs and unequal pay (Tallerico, 2000a). Blount (1998) painted a clear picture of the dilemma a woman can face when interviewing with the school board. Board members may ask illegal questions about family and personal business. If the interviewee reports the violation, it may jeopardize her opportunity, if the questions are refused, she is uncooperative and if she is candid, the

information divulged may not be judged in the same manner as it is for a male candidate.

There are a number of other variables that seem to affect women more than men in the selection process. A tacit age bias disproportionately affects women (Tallerico, 2000a). Women feel a pressure to play a role. The dilemma faced by women was that if they do not act or appear feminine enough they may be viewed as too masculine, which sometimes raises the issue of homophobia. A highly assertive style of leadership is not congruent with the acculturated concept of women and therefore women are negatively impacted when using this leadership style (Eagly, Karau, & Makhyani, 1995). Gupton and Slick (1996) also considered this by noting that women need to walk a fine line between “go getter” and “pushy broad,” stating that the district situation will determine how a woman applicant is accepted (p. 148). The most persuasive characteristic a candidate could possess was maleness, which satisfied stereotyped preferences (Bell, 1988). The size of the interview pool may also make a difference. If women make up more than 30% of a pool, they are judged less negatively than if they are 25% or less of the pool (Heilman 1980; Sackett, DuBois, & Noe, 1991). “And no matter how well they manage their sexuality and gender, women’s sexuality was always available as a means of control by covert or overt behaviors . . .” (Adler et al., 1993, p. 17).

Tallerico (2000a) discussed the subjectivity of the interviewing process. Despite efforts to focus the decision on objective standards and quality

indicators, it was often reached through an extensive focus group process; the process becomes “intuitive and unpredictable—that was human and biased” (p.105). She also observed that “subjectivity was more likely to favor male rather than female, and majority rather than minority, candidates, further noting that when the interview process turns subjective, the primarily white male board members tend to disadvantage those who are not like themselves” (p. 107).

“These forces are strengthened by similarly-attraction dynamics at the interpersonal level that increase the likelihood of school board members’ and consultants’ subconscious affinity for candidates demographically like themselves” (Tallerico, 2000b, p. 38). Bell (1988) noted that because trustworthiness and predictability are signified by social homogeneity, women superintendent’s gender was interpreted as a symbol of overriding difference and risk (p. 55).

### Summary

Of the approximate 40 applications for a position of superintendent, four or five are selected as finalist to be interviewed. Men have dominated the superintendency for so long that they have defined the position. The search consultant plays a determining role in the selection of a candidate for superintendent. This means that search firms are taking a risk to offer the school board women as candidates, given that the board is expecting male candidates. The lenses of gender are imbedded in all male-dominated systems and therefore it is also found in the superintendent selection process.

### **Male and Female Career Perceptions and Leadership Styles**

*Using 1992 statistics, it was estimated that “men are more than forty times more likely than women . . . to advance to the superintendency from teaching. (Skrla, 1999, p. 4)*

*The women and men who hold these key leadership positions are vitally important to the future success of American public schools. Their leadership will significantly shape and mold the schools of the next century, a century with a focus on high technology, globalization, and challenges to the human and physical condition of the planet. (Glass et al., 2001, p.1)*

*If empowerment is the first attribute of women’s leadership, creating the organization structure to foster it is the second. (Aburdene & Naisbitt, 1992, p. 95)*

### **Leadership Style**

*Women bring to practice many of the characteristics currently missing and considered necessary for reform. These characteristics are extremely pertinent to all superintendents as they consider changing their practices. (Glass et al., 2001, pp. 17-18)*

*The increase in women leaders must be accompanied by a change in societal attitudes toward the role of women and the value of nurturing.* (Pavan et al., 1995, p. 21)

Researchers in the early 1980s decried the important omissions in leadership traits in women who achieve, in terms of the variables that have been traditionally studied. Bates (1980) commented that methodology used in schools and in formal education systems was determined largely by the interests of the powerful. Schmuck (1987) noted that even when women were included as subjects, they remained “eclipsed from the conceptualization of leadership” (p. 5). Scientific management and bureaucratization helped prevent women from accessing administrative roles because of the belief that male dominance facilitated the viewpoint of women as natural followers and men as their leaders” (Hansot & Tyack, 1981).

Shakeshaft (1991) discussed differences between male and female leadership styles of superintendents. She identified that relationships, spending time with people, caring about individual differences, and concern for staff and students were attributes of female leadership. She further contrasted men’s leadership style from those of women in their desire to build community and respect for good pedagogy, and their high interest in curriculum and instruction. Shakeshaft found that women exhibited a more democratic and participatory leadership style that encouraged inclusiveness

Research in the late 1980s and onward has addressed some of these omissions. Kanter (1993) noted that public schools have shown a preference in employing administrators who were married white males. These administrators preferred people who look, live, and think as they do, “thus even when the pool of promotable teachers was female, it is not surprising that male administrators chose males” (p. 28). Brunner (2000b) commented that, “even with this new foundation, however, research focused on women superintendents was, and is, as scarce and scattered as the women themselves” (p. 76).

A number of debilitating stereotypes are attached to women’s leadership. Society, for example, conditions both men and women to believe that women are not as capable, as are men, of holding leadership positions. Ferguson (1984) took issue with the idea of a distinct feminine leadership style viewing it instead as a strategy or an effort to function as a sweet and agreeable leader to avoid the challenge of organizational inequalities. Grogan (1996) remarked that the lens for viewing women’s leadership was “so enmeshed in and reified by acceptance of hierarchical bureaucratic organization that scholars keep punching at theory with the same fallacious assumptions” (p. 489).

“As educational leaders, many women experience a landscape to which they are truly strangers because it is dominated by a culture of privileged, white, male leadership which sets the standards and norms of the education profession” (Gossetti & Rusch, 1995, p. 15). These leadership characteristics include descriptors for males such as: authoritative, decisive, controlling, and



unemotional which are more respected than the facilitative leadership style of women (Tyree, 1995).

Women are perceived by others as change agents (Wesson & Grady, 1995). "Recent meta-analytic work indicated that democratic and participative styles are more prevalent among women than men" (Offermann & Bell, 1992, p. 53). A number of researchers found that women as educational administrators are more attuned to teaching, curriculum, and instruction and children—perhaps because they spend more time as teachers and as mothers before they become administrators. They produce more positive interactions with community and staff, they have a more democratic, inclusive and conflict-reducing style and they are less concerned with bureaucracy (Marshall, 1985; Ortiz & Marshall, 1988; Shakeshaft, 1991).

Klenke (1996) observed that leadership styles have a gendered connotation, noting that the more instrumental, task-oriented, autocratic styles are associated with masculine leadership styles and interpersonal-oriented, charismatic, and democratic styles are associated with feminine leadership styles. There is an assumption of the "superiority of bureaucracy which creates a leadership binary by naming only certain behaviors as leadership, a fact that may have been promulgated because most leadership studies have focused on White males" (Young & McLeod, 2001, p. 462). Chaffins et al. (1995) discussed the same issue in terms of the stereotypical views of males as best suited to managerial positions because they possess more objectivity, impartiality, and

orientation toward problem solving. Levinson (1994) described the male orientation to leadership as aggressive attack and dominance, suggesting that it was binary—being either on the top or on the bottom. “The hegemonic normalizations of femininity and masculinity which were solidified over 50 years ago” are still in effect today (Skrla, 1999, p.12). The male orientation has been described in sexual terms as “penetration and thrust” versus the female orientation of “enveloping and surrounding.” The whole psychology of management was that of aggressive attack and dominance . . . to be on top or on the bottom—helpless, dependent and victimized” (Chaffins et al., 1995, p.1).

Haig-Brown (1997) urged the movement beyond the simplistic gender categories that define women as simply the binary opposite of men. Citing a meta-analysis of research in leadership, Eagly et al. (1992) found a correlation between how people interpret male and female behavior with leadership expectations. Females were perceived stronger in displaying communal dimensions, including being friendly, unselfish, concerned with others, and emotionally expressive. Males displayed agentic dimensions including being independent, masterful, assertive, and instrumentally competent. They noted that leadership style was perceived for females as being interpersonally oriented and collaborative whereas males were perceived as task oriented and dominating. Eagly et al (1992) observed that when leadership was carried out in a stereotypical masculine style, attaching these traditional divisions of gender traits devalued and discouraged women from seeking high income or status.

Researchers who compare leadership traits between genders do not necessarily agree. Eagly and Johnson (1990), in their meta-analysis of gendered leadership styles, pointed out the fact that there was little evidence of a significant difference between feminine and masculine leadership styles. Recent research points toward the importance of the work context in determining leadership style. In a study of store managers, Van Engen et al. (2001) found that the male leadership style was thought to be based on competitiveness, hierarchical authority, and emphasis on control. In contrast, female leadership styles were described as people-oriented, characterized by nurturing and interpersonal relationships.

### Summary

The hegemonic expectations of male orientation are reflected in what is defined as an effective leadership style. The descriptors for this type of leadership style include authoritative, decisive, controlling and unemotional. Women are generally seen as facilitative, democratic, inclusive, and conflict reducing. Categories have become gender-specific; although researchers disagree on a clear definition of what one gendered leadership style is as compared to the other. There is agreement that transformational leadership describes women's ways of leading

### Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is defined as getting subordinates to transform their own self-interest into the interest of the group through a concern

for a broader focus (Rosener, 1990). A number of researchers discussed transformational leadership as a feminine style. Van Engen et al. (2001) reasoned that because of the attention women gave to employees, transformational leadership was often referred to as a feminine leadership style. They reported that “research on sex differences in leadership styles has thus far shown a tendency towards similarity, rather than differences” (p. 583). They further observed that “sex discrimination in hiring, and promotion based on either a lack of a ‘masculine mode of management’ or a surplus of a ‘feminine mode of management’ has been proven to be unfounded” (p. 595).

Young and McLeod (2001) cited the preference by women for a transformational leadership style. They noted that the female participants “demonstrated a preference for a collaborative leadership orientation and placed importance on relationships” (p. 5). Gossetti and Rusch (1995) traced the morphing of transformational leadership, once identified as a feminine style, into a universal and privileged perspective. Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, and Van Engen (2003), in a meta-analysis of 45 studies of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles, found that female leaders were more transformational than male leaders and also engaged in more of the contingent reward behaviors that are a component of transactional leadership. They further pointed out that although the differences were small, they were encouraged by the findings for female leadership because of the positive implications for women functioning as effective leaders.

Kanter (1993, p. 99) noted the lack of research evidence that established differences in leadership aptitude or style. Kunkel et al. (2003, p. 203) noted that although males are still associated more with successful leadership, the gaps between male and female concepts of leadership have diminished from the 1970s and 1980s; yet, in a study of college students, these researchers found that both male and female students continued to identify male attributes with managers.

Black and Rothman (1998, p. 108) argue that “socialization into gender roles is the determinant of leadership styles.” Dunlap and Schmuck (1995) framed the female leadership dilemma by observing effective female leaders. They stated that, “if leadership was defined as taking a step away from the norm, and being a ‘good woman’ was defined as staying within the norms, these women leaders challenge our notions of leadership and gender by their lives” (p. 425).

### Summary

Transformational leadership is described as getting subordinates to transform their own self-interest into the interest of the group through a concern for a broader focus. Research supports the idea that transformational leadership style is primarily a feminine characteristic; however, some researchers have found that socialization into gender roles accounted for differences in leadership styles. Leadership styles are characterized by achievement styles

### Achievement Styles

Offerman and Bell (1992) observed that women look to accomplishment and men are fueled by competition. In a study looking at the achievement styles of women leaders, these researchers further noted that women found the most achieved fulfillment was derived from “the intrinsic satisfaction of task accomplishment, the vicarious satisfaction of assisting others to reach their goals, and from exerting influence through positions of power and authority ” (p. 49). By contrast they found that men were more oriented toward enjoying power and authority and “derived intense satisfaction from competing against others and winning” (p. 50).

Gilligan (1993) observed that women are concerned about competitive aspects of achievement, particularly in how competition may negatively impact relationships. Offermann and Bell (1992) found that female leaders are more intense and diverse in achievement styles. They observed that women found the most satisfaction in achieving a task or experienced vicarious satisfaction by helping others to reach goals. These researchers also found that gifted women seem to “combine the traditional characteristics of both sexes toward an androgynous leadership which valued relationships and competitive style”.

### Summary

There are differences in the achievement styles of men and women. Women are motivated by the feeling of accomplishment and men are fueled by competition. Although women categorized as gifted exhibited an achievement style that is more gender-neutral, typically women experienced satisfaction from

achieving or helping someone achieve a task as opposed to men who enjoy intense competition and winning. Competition is directly connected to the concepts of power.

### Power

*Inequality between genders persists because the power base women possess is more circumscribed than that of men. (Lindsey, 1997, p. 338)*

Differences between genders in terms of the possession and use of power, and the fact that women often exhibit more concern, may inhibit women from seeking high-level powerful positions. Brunner (1994) observed clear differences in the definition of power depending on gender. She noted that women define power as the capability to get things done through collaboration and consensus, whereas men define power as the ability to influence or lead others by having information and knowledge beyond those around them. She illustrated this by using the phrase “power to” for females and “power over” for males (p. 20). Although not obvious on the surface, traditional gender roles in the United States have “predisposed women toward ‘power with/to’ and have drawn men to social roles which expect them to exercise ‘power over’ people” (Brunner,

2000a, p. 134). “Power to,” as Brunner explained it, is collective and shared. She summed up the findings thus:

It was when the women talked about using or defining power in the masculine way—as over others—that they talked about the danger of being viewed negatively, as bitches, as unsuccessful. Thus, when they referred to power as defined in the dominant way, they engaged in periods of unsettled discourse. It was during these periods that they came closer to questioning the structural constraints of cultural norms related to power, while they could not imagine defining or using power in what they sensed to be the traditionally masculine fashion. (p. 89)

### Summary

There are differences between males and females in their perception and use of power. Women use power to get things done, men use information and knowledge to exert power to get things done. Brunner explained this concept as the feminine “power to” versus the masculine “power over”. This may be influenced by cultural expectations.

### **Summary of the Findings of the Review of the Literature**

The feminist-constructivist lens permits the researcher to view the superintendency in Iowa in terms of justice for both men and women, as well as for the staffs and students they lead. A historical overview of the balance of



leadership between males and females in the superintendency in Iowa demonstrated an androcentric culture that has, in large part, disenfranchised women from the role of superintendent. Although there has been a trend over the past seven years toward more women superintendents in Iowa, the percentage of women represented in that position hovers around 10% of the total superintendent population. This is approximately 3% below the national average.

Although the situation has improved in recent years, there has been a bias in the research about women in leadership roles, rendering them invisible. If they happened to be perform successfully in the study, researchers typically regarded them as outliers to accepted theory (Brunner, 2000b; Glass, 2000; Gossetti & Rusch, 1995; Shakeshaft, 1981, 1991). There was a further bias in research toward privilege as defined as white and male. Legislation by the federal government has been interpreted through a political lens or it has been largely circumvented to continue the status quo. Most legislation in this area is in the form of unfunded mandates.

Institutional barriers to the progress of women have been called the glass ceiling that denotes that most women can only advance to a certain level within an organization. This glass ceiling is evident in the educational system, which has been cited as one of the most discriminatory systems against women.

Women face a number of barriers, including:

1. Cultural: the long-held prejudices that men are superior and women are inferior which are carried out in society in order for a system to replicate and perpetuate itself.
2. Psychosocial: women struggle to overcome these culturally instilled prejudices within themselves, particularly the devaluing of those traits that would allow them to become leaders of the educational system.
3. Institutional: barriers such as the career pathways and the superintendent selection process that are overtly or covertly structured to impede women from advancing their careers.

Women's styles of leading are often devalued on the basis of the enforced values of those in power. Iowa is no exception (Fisher, 1995). Research shows that women still bear the major responsibility for caring for the home and children. Mentoring can be a key determiner in whether or not a woman decides to pursue, or continue to pursue, an administrative position.

Women face discrimination in both obvious and subtle ways. Although studies have found that women perform as well as men in terms of leadership, financial acumen and discipline, they are not credited with these attributes. The search and hiring process often includes these prejudices which is further complicated with the continued existence of an old-boy network.

These are areas that remain largely unexamined in Iowa. Have hiring practices and expectations for leadership been equitably carried out in Iowa? Why have only 37 women succeeded to the level of superintendent in the state?

Have they been successful because of (or in spite of) the system? The work of Buzzanell (1995), in particular, raises deeper and richer investigational issues including linguistic influence on gender issues, retention of gender identity, and research as praxis. The AASA (2000) research analysis (Glass et al, 2001), noted that there were areas of contention that are not clearly substantiated by meaningful data. What attributes do successful women have which could be articulated and shared to encourage promising candidates to pursue leadership? What has been learned and what can be learned?

There is little indication that the issues are going to dissipate. "This masculine dominance survives, adapts, and thrives in multiple and varied school administrative contexts" (Blackmore, 1993a, p. 29). Morrow and Torres (1994) frame the importance of this research in urgent terms. They observed that schools do not "simply produce, distribute and reproduce knowledge, cognitive or moral skills and disciplinary molds. Schools are also the "locations for the formation of subjectivities, identities, and subcultures" (p. 14). Morrow and Torres continued, "Since knowledge and power shape the form and content of curriculums through ideological interests formed in class, race and gender-specific terms, the notion of schools as a battleground was helpful to begin understanding the implications of these theoretic disputes for schools" (p. 14). "The presence of so few women and minority superintendents presents a major challenge to the profession. The compositions of student bodies and teaching staffs, along with community makeup, challenge the profession to improve its

record in preparing and placing women and minority administrators as superintendents” (Glass et al., 2001, p. 45).

The intent of this study was to articulate and consolidate a clearer picture of existing circumstances related to women in educational leadership and how the obstacles and barriers faced by this population has far-reaching impact on the social justice of us all. The study further proposed to construct new truth from what was found by researching long-held concepts and from examining the stories of women practicing in the field.

By preparing a composite portrait, and by explicating that portrait in terms of lived experiences of female superintendents, we can learn more, encourage more and, hopefully, open the way for greater opportunities for leadership for men and women in Iowa. Glass et al. (2001) state the challenge thus:

The future of the superintendency in the 21<sup>st</sup> century seems to be tied more closely than ever to harmonious working relationships with boards and community groups. Successful superintendents will be those who have excellent communication skills, understand the instructional process, and can work to create functioning coalitions that will ensure the financial and educational survival of the public school system. ( p. x)

## **Chapter 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Overview**

“What does it take for a woman to become a superintendent in Iowa?”

This study, based from the feminist-constructivist perspective, was primarily quantitative in nature and was combined a secondary qualitative research in order to examine this question. This chapter describes the research paradigm, approaches, and design that were used to achieve the purpose of the study. The intent was to search out barriers that were encountered by women in accessing the superintendency along with attributes which females exhibited that allowed them to overcome those barriers. These barriers and attributes were identified and articulated. Survey responses from the female superintendents were compared to those of their male counterparts. In the quantitative portion of the study, interviews were conducted with the three major superintendent recruiting firms in the state as confirming background for the data taken from the surveys and search consultants' interviews. Three female superintendents were also interviewed to provide real stories to enrich and expand on the results of the survey and search consultants' interviews.

### **Feminist Perspective**

*The specific image of an ideal manager varies across cultures, yet everywhere it privileges those characteristics that the culture associates primarily with men. (Izraeli & Adler, 1994, p. 13)*

A feminist perspective is one that “recognizes that there are social inequalities which rest on gender differences” (Grogan, 1996, p. 21). Feminist scholarship begins with the assumption of the centrality, normalcy, and value of women’s experiences. If, as Lather (1991) said, feminist research challenged the invisibility and distortion of women’s experiences, then it is important to assume this perspective because this study examined hegemonic practices within the institutional structure (Blackmore, 1993) and also sought justice, not simply for women, but for all people. Feminist researchers look for what has been left out—and the way female administrators struggle with their devaluation (Stewart, 1994). Addressing the deeply held cultural concept of females being perceived as workers and males as managers, Shakeshaft (1981, 1991) noted that a feminist perspective is an essential component in the paradigm for research on women in educational administration.

### **Constructivist Perspective**

Piaget and Inhelder (1971) noted that knowledge comes neither from the subject nor the object, but from the unity of the two. The constructivist approach

“recognizes that the viewer creates the data and ensuing analysis through interaction with the viewed” (Charmaz, 2000, p. 523). She further stated that “constructivism aims toward interpretive understanding of subjects’ meanings” (p. 510). Subjects’ meanings were examined through data from the survey instrument, interviews, and field notes in order to arrive at an interpretive understanding through the construction of a composite portrait of a female superintendent in Iowa.

### **Overview of the Research Design**

This study is quantitative and primarily descriptive in nature. The basic purpose of the survey was to create a composite portrait of an Iowa female superintendent in order to answer the question: What does it take to become a female superintendent in Iowa? This portrait was further enriched by interviews using qualitative techniques. It was anticipated that the qualitative findings would add insight and the depth of human experience to enrich the quantitative findings (Foss & Ellefsen, 2002).

A convincing argument can be made for the combining of the qualitative and quantitative styles of research within this study. Gorard (2002) stated that “complete research should be prepared to find, use and critique all evidence relevant to their quest, regardless of its form” (p. 345). He noted that the key underlying principle, which guides the method, should be fitness for purpose. Frazier (1995) noted that “new realists” confront the imprecision of measurement,

subjectivity, and reductivism in order to provide greater integrity in their studies in the form of “triangulation” between methods within one investigation. Gorard (p. 248) further stated that “in several fields it is no longer a question of whether it is acceptable to combine findings from different approaches, but more crucially how.”

According to Gorard (2002, p. 351) the most frequently used way of combining research findings is in the “new political arithmetic” model (NPA). In its simplest form, it involves a two-stage research design. In the first stage, a problem is defined by an analysis of relevant numeric data. Hence, the first part of this study involved a survey of all the female superintendents in Iowa along with a commensurate group of randomly selected male superintendents. Comparing these results with the results from male population of superintendents, provided similarities and differences between genders. The second purpose of the questionnaire was to compile a list of prompts for the in-depth interviews, which were completed in the second stage of the research. The data from this survey instrument were compiled and analyzed to create a portrait of a female superintendent in Iowa.

### **Combining Quantitative and Qualitative Procedures**

The methodology should be identified that best fits the research. There are a number of rationales that were particularly cogent to using a combined qualitative and quantitative approach as well as formats for combining them. Both



quantitative and qualitative methods have different, but complementary roles to play in a research process and outcome. The value of obtaining more comprehensive understanding of the data by combining qualitative and quantitative methods within the scope of a single project creates “a research synergy whose collective benefits are greater than those obtainable from either approach taken alone” (Sogunro, 2002, p. 7). The combining of methodologies also particularly fits the purposes of this study because, as Shibley and Durik (2001) noted “when used in tandem, these methods may prove to be extremely useful in leading to greater understanding of gender and its intersection with other social and cultural phenomena” (p. 9).

Merriam (1998) articulated the notion that method shapes how educational researchers make sense of what they are doing in terms of making an informed design choice for investigation design. A closer and interactive collection of soft data enhances the collection of the hard data (Segunro, 2002). In advocating for the use of a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodology, Sale, Lohfeld, and Brazil (1997) suggested that the two methods used either simultaneously or sequentially can yield more extensive results which these researchers termed “complementarity” (p. 51). This mixed methodology strengthened the quality of the research being conducted in this project.

## **Quantitative Design**

In keeping with the NPA model of analyzing through relevant numeric data, the first stage of the study used a quantitative survey involving all 37 female superintendents practicing in Iowa in the 2003-2004 school year with an equal-numbered sample of male superintendents. The survey instrument was designed to ascertain personal and professional traits that may have contributed to, or inhibited, their accessing a superintendency along with demographic variable information, such as age, years of experience in education, and size of the district.

Quantitative research usually contains numbers, proportions, and statistics and is invaluable for measuring people's attitudes, their emotional and behavioral states, and their ways of thinking. Quantitative research provides measurements for comparison and evaluation and gives an in-depth explanation of the meaning of an idea (Shields & Twycross, 2003). Decision makers want concrete, quantitative data; however, those data can be enriched by qualitative information. The quantitative portion of this study provided a basis of comparison and a resource from which to triangulate data along with field notes, and data from the interviews.

The quantitative stage of the study addressed the following null hypotheses to answer the research question:

1. There is no significant difference in age between males and females as to when they accessed their first superintendency.

2. There is no significant difference between male and female superintendents in terms of marital status.
3. There is no significant difference between male and female superintendents in terms of level of education.
4. There is no significant difference between male and female superintendents in terms of the student population of districts in which they serve.
5. There is no significant difference between male and female superintendents in terms of salary.
6. There is no significant difference between male and female superintendents in terms of professional experience.
7. There is no significant difference between male and female superintendents in terms of the length of time it takes to access superintendency.
8. There is no significant difference between male and female superintendents in terms of recruiter support.
9. There is no significant difference between male and female superintendents in terms of family and friends' support for the position.
10. There is no significant difference between male and female superintendents in terms of the support from a network.
11. There is no significant difference between male and female superintendents in terms of being mentored.

12. There is no significant difference between male and female superintendents in terms of self-confidence.
13. There is no significant difference between male and female superintendents in terms of perseverance.
14. There is no significant difference between male and female superintendents in terms of job experience leading up to superintendency.
15. There is no significant difference between male and female superintendents in terms of in the considered importance of compatibility with the school board.
16. There is no significant difference between male and female superintendents in terms of the considered importance of managerial skills.
17. There is no significant difference between male and female superintendents in terms of the considered importance of leadership skills.
18. There is no significant difference between male and female superintendents in terms of the importance attached to political savvy.
19. There is no significant difference between male and female superintendents in terms of the importance given to philosophy about the profession.

### **Quantitative Procedures**

The survey instrument was based on an adapted replication of a study that was previously conducted in Indiana as a doctoral dissertation at Ball State

University in the 1996-1997 school year. The purpose of that study was to provide a profile of female superintendents practicing in Indiana (Kowalski & Strouder, 1999). Because the Indiana study shared a similar purpose with the intent of this study, the survey instrument was used as a template to ascertain similar information.

The foci of the Kowalski and Strouder (1999) survey were demographic data, barriers to accessing the superintendency and their effects, positive characteristics, and influential actions of successful candidates who aspired to the superintendency. As part of the procedure to assure validity and reliability, the original survey instrument was reviewed and revised by a panel of experts which was comprised of three people: a former superintendent of schools, a professor of educational psychology at Ball State University, and a professor of education from Cardinal Strich College. They suggested minor adjustments to clarify responses and encourage clarity in the interpretation of the data. Their recommendations were reflected in the final form of the original survey (Kowalski & Strouder, pp. 39-40).

### **Adjustment of the Survey Instrument**

For the current study, the Indiana survey instrument was modified to enrich, localize, extend, and/or delineate the information consistent with the findings of the review of the literature found in Chapter 2. Because the original survey was used as a template and did not provide data to compare with the

results of the first study the instrument did not need to replicate the original instrument.

A description of the specific changes follows. The numbers referenced coincide with the numbers of the questions on the original survey. Copies of the original survey along with the adapted survey are found in Appendixes F and G, respectively. To increase the validity of this instrument, the adapted survey instrument was piloted with three experienced Iowa superintendents. These superintendents were not included as participants in the actual survey. Their suggestions and comments helped in the redesign of the survey instrument to assure clarity and focus. It was their opinion, for example, that the format of the survey instrument be changed precisely defining the Likert scales for each section, and having the participants answer on lines to the left of each question. The panelists reasoned that superintendents have a minimum of time to devote to surveys, and therefore recommended this more user- friendly design.

#### Survey Instrument Part I-A

The Personal Information section of the survey instrument was moved from the end to the beginning because this survey instrument included both men and women. Having the demographic information at the front of the survey instrument facilitated the sorting process. Opportunities for comments have been deleted as an option on the adapted survey instrument. The study was designed to collect richer data through face -to-face interviews than would be possible in a few lines of comments on a written survey instrument.

Other specific changes are as follows:

- The first question on the adapted survey instrument was added because of the need to identify the gender of the responders.
- Question 6 on the original survey instrument was eliminated. Information about ethnicity is not pertinent to this study.
- Question 7: Responses to marital status were expanded to include “remarried.” Consistent with the review of the literature review, these responses allow for more complete demographic information.

#### Survey Instrument Part I-B: Professional information

This section contains questions about the educational background of the respondents along with information about their educational experience, size of district, and salary.

The following changes to the original instrument have been made:

- Question 8: Choices for the responses have been increased to gain more precise information about the level of education of the respondents.

According to the review of the literature, women superintendents usually have more education than their male counterparts.

- Question 10: The item was reworded because of an error on the original form.
- Additional question as #11: “Were you an internal or external candidate for your first position?” This question was added to determine if, as the

literature says, a majority of women gain their position through internal promotion in the organization. This expands the information asked in Question 14 of the original instrument, which limits the information about whether the respondent has spent his/her entire career in the same district.

- Question 14: Delineation of school district populations was made more reflective of those in Iowa. The delineations on the original instrument were reflective of districts in Indiana.
- Questions 15 and 16 were expanded to make the questions more specific to this study.
- Additional question added as #17: A question was included to ascertain the salary range of the respondents. This is in concert with the research, which notes that males often are paid more than their female counterparts. Since the original survey did not compare male and female responses, this question was not asked.

### Survey Instrument: Part II

This section focused on barriers that have been identified by Indiana public school administrators who have aspired to become superintendents. On the original instrument respondents were asked to rate each item according to their opinion of how great an influence the barriers had in their experience of accessing the superintendency.



The spectrum of the responses has been expanded from a three- point Likert scale to a five-point Likert scale in order to provide respondents with a wider range of responses. The points of the Likert scale were clarified at the suggestion of the panelists who reviewed the survey instrument. Directions for completing this part of the survey instrument were also modified to reflect these changes.

Two further modifications and one addition were made to the original instrument in this part. To simplify the meaning of Item H, panelists suggested the original word “tenacity” be replaced with the more commonly used word “perseverance.” One strand of research represented in the review of the literature warranted adding Item I, which reflects the difficulty women experience in relocating for job purposes. At the suggestion of the reviewers, the comment section was revised with the purpose of inviting further reaction or response to the lists of barriers.

### Survey Instrument: Part III

The title of Part III, formerly “Personal Characteristics,” was changed to “Personal/Professional Characteristics” to reflect more accurately the items covered in this section. This section includes a list of 26 characteristics that impact a superintendent’s job performance.

Changes to this part of the survey instrument are as follows: Both the directions and Item B have been adjusted to address both a male and female

audience. As in the previous section, the Likert scale has been increased by two more options to allow for more flexibility for the respondents' answers. The word "tenacity" (Item T) was changed to "perseverance" to clarify meaning and to be consistent with the changes in previous section.

The following items were added at the suggestion of the superintendent reviewers: V: Maintaining a professional network, W. Support of a recruiter or headhunter, X. Became more visible professionally, Y. Gained leadership outside education, Z. Obtained support from family and Friends, and XX. Other. The reviewers felt that these additions expanded the opportunities for participants to respond to issues that the reviewers felt were important to the field. The suggestion for "Other" allows the participants to add their own comments.

#### Survey Instrument: Part IV

The addition of a new Part IV was made at the suggestion of the panelists. This part asked the respondents to choose their top five characteristics from the list in Part III and to rank them in the order they feel are the most essential to attaining a superintendent's position. The rationale behind this suggestion was that the prioritizing opportunity expanded the scope of the survey instrument to allow the researcher an opportunity for a deeper analysis of the responses to the previous section.

### New Survey Instrument: Part V (Formerly Part IV)

Part V of the survey instrument identifies a list of experiences or influences that could impact the success of an individual in accessing the superintendency. Respondents are asked to rate the level of importance these experiences/influences had in their own lives in accessing the position of superintendent.

Two changes have been made to Part V. Again, the Likert scale was expanded by two more options with the choices being defined so as to compliment the choices being made. The directions were modified and clarified at the suggestion of the reviewers. The addition of Item L: "Other" was also added in response to the reviewers to expand the response opportunity for the participants.

The web master in charge of the on-line software suggested further adjustments to the survey to make the questions more objective and clear and to honor the parameters of the software. The changes were as follows:

#### Part I:

1. Personal information was moved to the end of the instrument because of survey instrument software requirements for data efficiency.
2. In question 13 which queries salary range, an additional option was added to allow for those superintendents who may be earning a salary below \$60,000 per year.

Part II: In question 14, the Likert-type Scale response options were restated to more clearly delineate locations on a continuum.

Part III: The Likert-type Scale response options were restated to more clearly delineate locations on a continuum.

Part IV: The original Part II was moved to Part IV. Because of limitations of the software, the prioritization process required a repetition of the list. The following changes were made to simplify the ranking process:

Lack of family support	to	family support
Lack of employment opportunity	to	employment opportunity
Gender discrimination		deleted
Lack of peer/collegial support	to	peer/collegial support
Family responsibilities		no change
Lack of self-confidence	to	self-confidence
Racial/ethnic discrimination	to	race/ethnicity
Personal lack of tenacity	to	tenacity
Cannot relocate to another area	to	ability to relocate to another area

Part V: The Likert-type Scale response options were reworded for clarification.

An additional question was added to the survey inviting participants to request the results of the survey. The question asking for the gender of the respondents was again moved because the software could then be programmed to default to a final question, which was specific to females. This question

solicited the female superintendents' willingness to participate in a follow-up interview.

### **Population**

The survey was conducted on a web site using Zoomerang on-line survey software. The inquiries were made via e-mail. Research about response rates that employed this venue is still emerging (Schonlau, Fricker, & Elliot, 2001). The constant changes in technology make many studies out of date by the time they are published. For example, it is postulated that the recent increase in unsolicited e-mail (SPAM) increases the possibility of potential respondents being unwilling to respond.(Sheehan, 2001). Shehan indicated that his research found a growing concern about contracting computer viruses through participation in electronic surveys. These findings were pertinent to the current study because it allowed the researcher to take proactive measures to reassure potential respondents.

A second concern of using e-mail and web site surveys mentioned in the literature was that of the technical capabilities of the recipients (Shannon, Johnson, Searcy, & Lott, 2002). This was not considered to be a concern in this particular survey because of a state-wide expectation that superintendents be technologically competent. The Iowa Department of Education Directory lists an e-mail address for each superintendent. All communications are issued

electronically from the department; therefore it was a logical assumption that technical capabilities would not be a barrier to the respondents in this survey.

An introductory letter, an informed-consent document, consistent with the guidelines of the Institutional Review Board, and the address of the website (URL) where the questionnaire was located was sent via e-mail to all 37 female superintendents practicing in Iowa during the 2003-2004 school year. The documents were also sent to Iowa male superintendents practicing during that same year. The male superintendents were randomly selected in commensurate numbers to the female respondents.

### Response Rates

Response rates are positively affected by salience of the topic (in this case, superintendents in Iowa) and the quality of the pre-notification (Cook, Heath, & Thompson, 2000). The letter and consent form were sent with the purpose of acquainting potential respondents with the focus and importance of the study and to assure them of the confidential nature with which their responses would be treated. A credible sponsoring institution may be a positive influence on the number of responses received from an electronic survey (Sheehan, 2001), therefore both Drake University and Grant Wood Area Education Agency were mentioned in the notification letter and permission form.

Confidentiality is a prime concern for respondents of web-based surveys (Couper, 2000). Assurance of confidentiality was elaborated in the cover letter. Zoomerang on-line survey software, which provided for the tracking of responses

while protecting the identities of individual respondents, was employed as the vehicle for the survey instrument. The survey was administered by a credible third party who serves as public relations specialist employed by the Grant Wood Area Education Agency. These reassurances were elaborated in the cover letter offering further assurance to potential respondents.

Participants were informed that their responding to the questionnaire implied that they were aware of the rights and risks in being involved and that their permission was implied by their participation in the study, as outlined in the notification letter (Appendix H and Appendix I). The Zoomerang on-line survey software reported e-mail addresses that were in error. Seven e-mail addresses were found to be in error by the system. These addresses were checked and verified by the researcher, and the survey was again sent to these potential respondents using the new addresses.

The Zoomerang system tracked the responses. This software also offered the advantage of directly entering the data into a statistical program, which reduced data entry error (Mentor, 2002). The e-mail message had an embedded URL directing respondents to the survey. The embedded URL approach offset the concern expressed by Mentor that surveys using an attachment rather than an embedded URL do not have strong response rates.

The timing of the reminders is important and key to good response rates (Porter & Witcomb, 2003). Porter and Whitcomb elaborated other criteria which positively impacts the response rates to surveys including, telling respondents

that they have been selected as part of a small group of participants, as well as including a deadline for when the website would be shut down. Both of these strategies were used in this study.

If potential participants did not respond, an encouraging e-mail, consistent with the findings of Porter and Whitcomb (2003), which was personal in nature, e.g., mentioning something specific about their school district (Yammmarino, Skinner, & Childers, 1991; Yun & Trumbo, 2001). The first reminder was sent one week after the initial launch of the survey (Yun & Trumbo, 2000). The message was sent to each potential respondent stating that the survey had included only a select group of superintendents and reaffirming the importance of their particular response to the survey.

A window of four weeks was allowed in which to receive responses to the survey (Mentor, 2002; Raziano, Jayadevappa, Valenzula, Weiner, & Lavizzo-Mourey, 2001). Response rates were increased by using four or more reminders (Yun & Trumbo, 2001), therefore after the second week people who had not responded were contacted by the researcher by phone. Addresses that were returned, were rechecked and if updated addresses were found, the survey was sent to the new address.

Two female superintendents had left their positions at the end of the previous school year and could not be located. Methods used to track them included calling their former district to request a forwarding address. When there was no forwarding address, letters were sent in care of general delivery at their



previous location. Attempts were also made to locate these superintendents using search engines on the Internet. A third former superintendent was located but did not presently have access to e-mail and was therefore sent a paper copy of the survey instrument. Upon receipt of her survey, the researcher entered her responses into the electronic survey database.

The survey was launched on January 10, 2005, and was held open until February 10, 2005. At that point 63 responses had been received from 36 male superintendents and 27 female superintendents. The total percentage response rate was 85.1% with a better response from males (97.2%) than females (75.6%).

### **Management of the Data**

Zoomerang on-line survey software was used to administer this survey. Grant Wood Area Education Agency was licensed as a user of this software and their license was used for this study. A professional webmaster administered the actual survey, and provided the researcher with the results. The responses were tracked so that participation reminders could be sent. Female respondents were queried as to whether they would be willing to be interviewed. All responses were held in strictest confidence and were stored in a locked file on the researcher's computer as well as on a separate flash drive.

### **Analysis of the Data**

All data manipulation, transformation, and analysis were performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SAS, Version 8) for Windows 2000 along with Microsoft Excel. Results were coded and checked for errors. Data analysis included summary descriptive results and tests for statistical significance. All comparisons were made with a nominal variable (gender).

The overall support and barrier scores were analyzed using the Wilcoxon/Mann-Whitney/ U, a non-parametric variant of the t- test, which was used to compare two independent groups of sampled data. This variant “can be useful if the distribution contains extreme outliers” (Glass & Hopkins, 1996, p. 305). Unlike the parametric t-test, this non-parametric made no assumptions about the distribution of the data. This is used in situations in which the assumption of normality or equality of variance is not met. The survey instrument met the criteria for the Wilcoxon/Mann-Whitney/U test because the two samples were independently drawn from the source populations, the scale of measurement for both samples has the properties of an equal interval scale, and the source populations can be reasonably supposed to have a normal distribution (Lowry, 2004). Results of the data were tabulated and reported in Chapter 4 of this document.

The data were used to construct a composite of successful female Iowa superintendents. The composite, enriched and deepened by the qualitative data could provide information and encouragement to potential female candidates

wishing to access superintendent positions, or used by school districts hoping to hire a female superintendent.

### **Qualitative Design**

In the second stage of the research, qualitative inquiry methodology was used to deepen and enrich the initial findings. The emphasis of qualitative research is on capturing the detail and/or the depth something significant in the social world (Goodwin & Horowitz, 2002). Merriam & Simpson (1995) observed that the use of qualitative research provides a way to show the degree of relationship among variables in an existing phenomenon. The qualitative portion of the research involved two different populations:

The first set of informants involved search consultants from each of the major recruiting firms in Iowa. According to the literature, search consultants serve as key gatekeepers in the superintendent selection process (Tallerico, 2000b). The fact that the search consultants are active in the educational field made them well versed with regard to the current search processes in Iowa, as well as offering deeper insights or information about the search process.

In order to interview search consultants from the major recruiting firms in the state, the Iowa Association of School Board organization was contacted to obtain the names of the firms who do the most superintendent job searches in Iowa. According to their records, aside from a few schools that conduct their own searches and one or two private entrepreneurs who may conduct a limited

number of searches, there are three major superintendent search firms active in Iowa. Each of these major firms was contacted and consultants' names were obtained. The researcher then made phone or e-mail contact with these consultants requesting an interview. The reason for the interview was shared with each consultant, who, in each case, consented to be interviewed. Because of the limited number of firms practicing in the state, great care was taken to protect their anonymity in reporting their data. Although fictitious names were used for the superintendents interviewed, the researcher felt that attributing a particular quote to a consultant, even using a fictitious name for the consultants could compromise their identity if the complete study were read by knowledgeable people in the educational field.

The three female superintendents who were interviewed were a sub-set of participants selected in the first stage of the survey. The interviews with the female superintendents used an open-ended questioning technique with prompts interjected as necessary to encourage the informants to provide as much insight and information as possible. Selection of the female superintendents required theoretical sampling. Strauss and Corbin (1998) defined the purpose for theoretical sampling is to go to "place, people, or events that will maximize opportunities to discover variations among concepts and to densify categories in terms of their properties and dimension" (p. 201).

Sampling often involves purposeful selection in the initial stages of the study (Coyne, 1997; Glaser, 1978; Sandelowski, 1995). Sample selection has a

profound effect on the ultimate quality of the research (Coyne, 1997; Glesne, 1999). The strategy of participant selection in qualitative research “rests on the multiple purposes of illuminating, interpreting and understanding—and on the researcher’s own imagination and judgment” (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 27). Blais and Durand (1997) offered a practical consideration in the selection of informants that included the availability of the informants and their capacity to respond to the questions.

“Qualitative research takes the view that reality is socially constructed by each individual and should be interpreted rather than measured; that understanding cannot be separated from context “ (Johnson & Waterfield, 2004, p. 123). Small, purposeful samples of articulate respondents should be used because they can provide important information (Sale et al., 1997). The sampling strategy is determined by the research question, the scale of the study and the type of material to be collected and the sample size is dictated by the specific purpose and context of the research. Sandelowski (1995) indicated that the sample should be sufficient to generate depth rather than breadth, and may comprise only a small number of participants. Bogden and Biklen (2003) referred to this purposeful sampling as the “snowball sampling technique” (p. 64). To determine which superintendents to interview, Hunter’s 1953 reputational method (as cited in Brunner, 2000) was used:

- To identify those superintendents who would make good subjects to interview suggestions were solicited from each of the representatives of the Iowa recruiting firms during their interviews.
- To corroborate this list several superintendents, practicing or retired, were invited to suggest female superintendents for the purpose of an interview. This was done with the intention of finding female superintendents who either had extensive experience in the area of accessing a position or those who had been in the field for a number of years, but who had changed jobs. The reason for using those who had changed jobs was to capture current data about accessing superintendency.

Four superintendents were selected using the following criteria:

- a. Recent and extensive experience with the superintendent application process
- b. A number of years in the superintendency, but in different districts
- c. The recurrence of a name from among sources of a female who was respected and held high credibility in the field.

Three of the four superintendents were interviewed. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) noted that “friendship appears to bias data selection and to decrease objectivity” (pp. 98-99). These researchers cited the risk of the interviewer/friend over-identifying with known subjects and therefore may have a tendency to regard data from the known subject as more important. They also warned that there was a tendency not to not ask penetrating questions for fear of alienating

the subject, and further, that the participant may respond in a way to meet perceived researcher expectations. For these reasons, a decision was made not to interview the fourth superintendent.

### **Informants**

The researcher found little mention in educational research of how to determine the number of superintendent interviews needed. Industrial/organizational psychology literature addressed the determination of the number of interviews when performing qualitative research. Even those observations were nebulous. For example, Pass and Robertson (1980) found that the number of interviewees did not impact the validity of the research. Beaty (1996) used interview numbers of 10, 15, 20, and 212 participants and concurred with the 1980 findings of Pass and Robertson. Rouleau and Krain (1975) however found that if there were fewer than 30 employees in a job, then four to six interviews should be sufficient. Because this number approximated the total number of female superintendents three interviews were conducted. The three search consultants provided a broad representation of that aspect of the educational field.

### **Qualitative Procedures**

Qualitative research emphasizes the researcher's role as an active learner who can tell the story from the participant's point of view (Creswell, 1998).

Maxwell (1992) noted that qualitative research allows for the identification of relevant and unanticipated factors, which influence the situation and the issues. Researchers such as Tallerico (2000a) and Grogan (1996) have called for qualitative examination of the issue of the scant female representation in the superintendency. Qualitative research design needs to remain sufficiently open and flexible to permit exploration of whatever the phenomenon under study offers for inquiry and to be responsive to real-world conditions that meet the information needs of the study (Coyne, 1997; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The representation of these data has the underpinnings of the *testimonio* genre.

The *testimonio* is “a politically and pedagogically conscious, counter-hegemonic, educational research tool” (Haig-Brown, 2003, p. 422). The *testimonio* technique of inquiry has traditionally focused on “those who have been silenced, excluded and marginalized by their societies” (Tierney, 2000, p. 541). It is fundamentally different from other qualitative strategies in that it is less concerned with literary structure and more concerned about changing oppressive structures. “In the *testimonio*, the testifier’s life is directly linked to social movement and change” (Tierney, 2000, p. 540) Tierney further states:

*Testimonio* is situated within a series of complex and ambiguous political and cultural relations. The *testimonio* has the least overtly intrusive hand of an author and is the most indigenously derived of the qualitative techniques. The interviewer then, becomes the “instrument “ of the individual who testifies. In *testimonio* a moral or



social imperative exists for the protagonist to tell his or her story, and although the *testimonio* might be circumscribed by everyday events that have happened to the individual, the centerpieces of the text pertain to issues such as . . . the struggle for survival.

Beverley (1992, p. 92) noted that “*testimonio* represents an affirmation of the individual subject . . . in connection with a group or class situation marked by marginality, oppression and struggle”.

The genre of the *testimonio* is a natural fit with the issues considered in this study. The study is concerned with a marginalized segment of the population (female administrators) and their stories are a venue which, when viewed through the *testimonio* framework provides the reader with insights that other qualitative techniques could not so readily provide. Female superintendents could be considered a marginal population because of the disproportionate number of female superintendents in Iowa as compared with the numbers of women represented in the teaching profession. Blount (1996), Brunner, (2000), Grogan (1996) Tallerico (2000b) have cited female administrators as disenfranchised from the mainstream selection process for the position of superintendent. Connections between the rationale for using the *testimonio* genre and the particular *testimonio* underpinnings that were used in this study included the following:

- The interviewer listened differently, that is, the interviewer listened “across differences” to open up productive investigative spaces (Haig-Brown, 2003, p. 418).
- Grogan (1996) cited the need for female superintendents to tell their stories. The *testimonio* genre of qualitative research provides a venue in which “the speaker is most likely to be heard in his or her own words, rather than in the opined interpretations and conclusions of the speaker”(Tierney, 2000, p. 3).
- “Although *testimonio* focuses on the individual subject, the point is always that the individual speaks in relation to, and for, a group that is struggling for voice. This gives representational value to the silence cited by Blount (1998) and Skrla, (2000a) that exists for women in educational leadership. It is “simultaneously personal and collective” (Yudice, 1991, p.15).
- The *testimonio* genre allowed, “constructing a text to be both provocative and (sometimes) disturbing” (Haig-Brown, 2003, p. 421).

## **Interviews, Questions, and Data Collection**

### Interview Questions

The interviews for the search consultants used a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix J). Prompts were used to encourage the search consultant to add more information, to justify a statement or to clarify an observation. As a final step in the interview process, the search consultants were asked to add their own

insights that may not have been covered in the interview protocol. All interviews with the search consultants were completed prior to scheduling the interviews with the female superintendents. The text of these interviews was analyzed for possible probes/prompts that could be used during the open-ended interviews with the superintendents.

In qualitative research one of the most commonly used interview techniques is open-ended in nature allowing for flexibility in responses (Seidman, 1991). The superintendent interview portion of the research addressed capturing the “experience as expressed in lived and told stories” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 40). The investigator may ask the respondent to propose her own insights into certain occurrences and may use such propositions as the basis for further inquiry (Yin, 1989). These data provided thick and rich description to add to the survey data to create a portrait of a female Iowa superintendent.

### Interview Procedure

The interviews took place in a face-to-face format at a location determined by the participant with a priority placed on the comfort of the participant. The interviews lasted from one to two hours. Consistent with the advice of Burnett & Motowidlo (1998), one interviewer conducted all participants' interviews. The interviews were recorded. Prior to the interview, each participant was given a written document listing their rights and outlining the risks associated with the study. After reading this document, each participant was asked to sign a

permission form stating that they understood the provisions of the interview process. Those documents were filed in a secure location in the researcher's office. All interviews were transcribed verbatim by an individual trained and experienced in legal transcription. To ensure accuracy, the researcher also reviewed the transcript along with the tape of the interview.

### Search Consultant Interviews

The purpose of the recruiter interviews was to portray how superintendents are chosen and how women fit into that process. Since the search and hiring process are so central to the employment of superintendents, including data from search consultants could yield important information about the process of accessing the superintendency. Because they are active in the field, the search consultants could also share important and current information about what school boards consider in choosing candidates, the intimate descriptions of the search process, and their insights as to why there are so few female superintendents in Iowa. The results of the first set of interviews with the search consultants were used as a basis to probe for related information from the second set of interviews with the female superintendents.

The first search consultant interview was conducted at a neutral site, and in the two other interview situations, the informants came to the researcher's office. The interview protocol was developed and scripted based on the review of the literature and the questions found in the survey instrument (Appendix J). The

interview was semi structured, however, the interviewer encouraged the informants to expound or clarify points in the interview with the purpose of learning more about the issue. These interviews were completed before the interviews with the female superintendents.

The interview procedure was identical in the two sets of interviews. A matrix was constructed to connect common themes in an accurate and efficient manner. The interview transcripts were highlighted, coded, and placed in the matrix. From the matrix a copy of the transcript was physically cut apart and pasted together according to different themes.

#### Female Superintendent Interviews

As with the search consultant interviews, priority was placed on informants' comfort and convenience in determining the location. Two of the interviews with the female superintendents took place at their offices. The third interview was held in a neutral location suggested by the participant. Two open-ended questions were used for each interview:

1. Would you tell me about your life as an educator and how you became a superintendent?
2. What does it take to become a superintendent in Iowa?

The questions were framed so as to provide participants with the latitude to discuss their experience and opinions in their own way. As suggested by Bogden and Biklen (2003), probes were used to produce "rich data filled with words that reveal the respondent's perspective" (p. 96). Examples of probe

questions used were: "What do you mean?" and "Take me through the experience" (p. 96). Analysis of the search consultants' interviews provided further possibilities for probes. Even though the direction of the interview was initiated with the starter question, encouragement for in-depth explanation, description and interjection of details for questions was provided.

### Field Notes

Field notes were made as part of the interview process. In the words of Strauss and Corbin (1990) field notes are used "when the events or actions described in the field notes might help readers to better visualize the analytical points being made especially when the analytic points might otherwise be difficult to grasp" (p. 283). Following each interview as part of the continuous effort to ensure credibility, the researcher recorded copious field notes (Gilgun, 1992; Marlow, 1943). These were mechanically recorded and then transcribed in an effort to include as many details and reflections as possible. The analysis of the qualitative data was an iterative process with continual additions and emergence of themes until the final interviews were completed. Using the constant comparative process as a guide, data were organized and triangulated along those suggested themes and included new themes that emerged. The careful field notes and analysis process helped determine common themes and patterns and helped to assure the validity of the research (Maxwell, 1992). The form used for the cross connections is included in Appendix K.

### Artifacts

During the interview process, participants were invited to share any artifacts that might pertain to their experiences, including, but not limited to, such things as letters from recruiters, lists of questions from the selection committees, or communications from school boards. The sources of data included their responses to the survey instrument and the content of the interviews. Although invited, the female interview participants did not share any artifacts.

### Analysis of the Data

Information derived from the interviews was “discovered, developed and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 23). A coding paradigm was constructed which identified information about the data and a second construct was used for interpretive analysis of the data (Merriam, 1998). Using the constant-comparative method of collecting data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) categories were systematically categorized testing common themes and patterns, as well as recording connecting/emerging themes or patterns (Appendix K).

Yin (1989) called for criteria for interpreting the findings, therefore a matrix was constructed with which to assure that the issues addressed in the survey instrument are continued and expanded by the qualitative data (Appendix L). The format for the analysis was cross-referenced with the areas of concern as

indicated in the results of the survey instrument. Although member-checking review methods were discussed in the research literature, it was determined not to use this technique. The reason member-checking was not used was because the participants would most likely seek themselves and their own reality in the data, would conflict with the researcher producing a conflation of many realities in a way that still represented each participant (Johnson & Waterfield, 2004).

### Merging the Data

The qualitative research was “nested” within quantitative inquiry (Miller & Crabtree, 1994). Research should tackle important questions and employ methods best equipped to address those questions (Brinton & Fujiki, 2003). “Using quantitative and qualitative methods in an ongoing research program can build a body of evidence that is both enlightening and helpful” (p.168).

The design for addressing the research question entailed describing the context of the problem, the issues surrounding the question and a narrative about the lessons learned. The narrative included personal experiences so as to not interrupt the flow of the interview. Selected comments from the interviewees built upon the quantitative data taken from the questionnaires (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Rich, thick description helps assure transferability (Creswell, 1998). An effort was made to capture the distinctive attributes of each female superintendent. Observations and insights given by the search consultants were compared, and



where applicable, connected, and incorporated into the study. These data helped affirm and/or dispute the theoretical proposition that women are not employed at an equal rate, as are men.

### **Management of the Data**

*The analytic process demands a heightened awareness of the data, a focused attention to those data, and an openness to the subtle, tacit, undercurrents of social life. (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p.154)*

The responses to all the questions were transcribed and analyzed to uncover the emergent themes, consistent with the outlined objectives for the study: the barriers to and the characteristics of those successful female aspirants that helped them attain their positions. The second purpose of the analysis was to enrich and give depth to the survey results.

All transcripts were maintained in both hard copy and on flash drive. Data were coded to protect the identity of the participants and was kept secure and confidential. The hard copies of the transcribed interviews were stored in a secure location at the researcher's office. Electronic copies of those documents were stored in a locked file on the researcher's hard drive with a back-up copy stored on the researcher's flash drive. The hard copy was manipulated in order to determine recurring trends and themes. The flash drive served as back up and preserved the original integrity of the interview.

### Trustworthiness

*One purpose for which triangulation has been used is to seek confirmation of the findings of a study by seeking evidence to corroborate or refute an overall interpretation. (Mays & Pope, 2000, p. 1)*

*The assumption is that each strategy used will expose different aspects of reality (Patton, 1999), and thus research has higher internal validity if more than one method, investigator or data source give rise to consistent findings. (Bloor, 1997, as cited in Johnson & Waterfield, 2004, p. 126)*

“Triangulation refers to the use of multi-data sources or theoretical perspectives in a study” (Bogden & Biklen, 2003, p. 262). Triangulation involved the data of the survey instrument, interviews of the female superintendents, interviews of search consultants, and the field notes. The issues of reliability and validity were addressed through the process of triangulation. Glesne (1998) noted that consistency is what makes accumulated data trustworthy. Qualitative research techniques rely on the researcher’s objectivity to accurately portray the evidence garnered during the interview process. Merriam (1988) suggested that to minimize the possibility of misinterpretation, qualitative researchers should use a multitude of investigators, data sources, and methods to triangulate and

confirm the findings generated in the research. Although there was only one investigator in this study, the triangulation of data served to confirm findings. Triangulation increases the “scope, depth and consistency in methodological proceedings” (Flick, 1998, p. 230). Conclusions framed in terms of analytic generalizations, were used in constructing the composite portrait of the Iowa female superintendent.

### **Limitations and Strengths**

The influence of the research’s experiences, beliefs and personal history should be acknowledged (Krefting, 1991). Personal and intellectual biases should be made explicit to enhance the credibility of the research findings (Mays & Pope, 2000). This researcher has considerable experience in the education field, has been a member of the superintendent selection committee on two occasions and is certified as a superintendent in Iowa. While it is true that the information gathered was filtered through the bias of the researcher, it was tempered with the use of reflective field notes, which Bogden and Biklen (2003) cite as “one way of attempting to acknowledge and control the observer’s effect” (p. 116). To use data to further a researcher’s subjectivities would diminish the value of the study. The researcher must demonstrate an obligation to protect the integrity of the research by addressing her own subjectivity (p 35). Researchers conduct qualitative studies “in the reasonable hope of bringing something grander than the case to the attention of others”(Glesne & Peskin, 1992, p.148). Further, the depth and detail of new data revealed a level of complexity to the

issue not previously experienced by the researcher and helped objectify the study (Bogden & Biklen, 2003).

Research has also addressed situations in which there are shared attributes between the interviewer and the participant. Attributes such as similar personality (Foster, 1990), same gender (Foster, Dingman, Muscolino & Jankowski, 1996) and/or same race (Prewett-Livingston, Field, Veres, & Lewis, 1996) indicate that the interview will be viewed more favorably by the interviewer (Howard & Ferris, 1996). To further control for this limitation, the chair of the dissertation committee reviewed the analysis of the interviews for trustworthiness.

To offset the possibility of researcher subjectivity, the use of multiple sources for research and triangulation helped to objectify the results. Yin (1989) noted that a broad evidentiary base “increased markedly the reliability of the entire case study” (p. 99). Yin alluded to this when he directed researchers “to conduct the research so that an auditor could repeat the procedure and arrive at the same result” (p. 45). The use of the *testimonio* genre in the reporting of facts, research and observations from the interviews provided authentic information that had not been filtered through the lens of the researcher.

The scant number of female superintendents in the state gave cause for two limitations. The first limitation was that such a small population might have limited the variety of the responses that could be expected in a larger group. The second limitation of this study was that with only 37 female superintendents in

Iowa, there was a possibility of compromising the anonymity of the informants. Although assurances were offered for confidentiality, the small number of female superintendents in the state and the research data pointing to possible culture of silence might cause reticence in answering the questions with complete candor (Brunner, 2002).

Another limitation of the study also was concerned with interviewing only three female superintendents. As explained previously, a fourth superintendent was selected for this process, however the researcher was personally acquainted with this potential informant, and therefore, based on research literature, it was determined not to pursue this interview. The timeline for the study did not permit attempting to identify another female superintendent to interview.

The strengths of this study outweigh the limitations. In discussion of the limitations, wherever possible, balancing strategies have been introduced to offset the limitations. The study was designed to include the entire population of practicing female superintendents in Iowa during the 2003-2004 school year, the response of whom provided an in-depth portrait of the recent past.

The response rate from the respondents on the web-based survey was very strong. With a female superintendent response rate of 72.9% and a male superintendent response rate of 94.4% resulting in an 85.1% overall response rate provided strong data for the study. In addition the data from each of the three major search firms in Iowa provided current and in-depth data about the selection process in the state.

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A further strength of this study was the fact that the results could provide critical information to aspiring candidates for the superintendency. This information was enhanced through primary source research. This study could shed light on possible discrimination that persists despite federal legislation. The articulation and documentation of real stories add insight and credibility to the data for those aspiring to the position of superintendent.

### Summary

This chapter described the methods and procedures used to carry out the study. The study was based in the feminist-constructivist paradigm and used a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The qualitative data from the female superintendent and search consultant interviews used a version of the *testimonio* genre to gather and report information. A description of how the two methodologies compliment each other to strengthen the study was also included.

Data sources included a web-based survey questionnaire, in-depth interviews with search consultants who represented the three largest search firms in the state and three female superintendents along with field notes. Because the data retrieved in the survey had an unknown distribution, the nonparametric Wilcoxon/Mann-Whitely/ U test was used to analyze the quantitative data. The qualitative data were analyzed by the constant-comparative method, data from the survey, field notes, and data from the

interviews were triangulated to expand, objectify, and verify the information about female superintendents in Iowa. The chapter concluded with a discussion of the procedures that were used to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings along with a discussion of the limitations and strengths of the study.

## **Chapter 4**

### **RESULTS**

#### **ANALYSIS OF THE DATA**

##### **Introduction**

This chapter provides an analysis of the data derived from the completed web-based questionnaire and the data gathered from the interviews of search consultants representing the three major search firms in Iowa along with three interviews with female superintendents in Iowa. The methodology for this study included a mix of qualitative and quantitative data, with the quantitative data providing the basis for the rest of the inquiry. The qualitative data were used to extend, deepen and enrich the results of the quantitative research. The four data sets from the quantitative study, the search consultant interviews, the female superintendent interviews, and the field notes were combined through an iterative process which connected strands and topics. An iterative process also provided some additional data which emerged as new strands or insights. An iterated process is one which is compared with itself, repeatedly, in order to extrapolate strands or themes that might not be readily apparent on a first or second engagement with the data (Glasner, 1992). This iterative process yielded some additional information pertinent to the study.

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Using the 19 hypotheses as the overall organization, the results of the quantitative research and the qualitative research were combined in a discussion of each hypothesis. The additional themes will be introduced following the discussion of the 19 hypotheses.

The quantitative research involved a survey questionnaire that was sent to 74 Iowa public school superintendents. This population included all 37 female superintendents practicing during the 2003-2004 school year and a random sample of male superintendents. Sixty-three superintendents logged on to the online web-based survey, however several survey items did not receive 100% response. This may reflect error of operation on the part of the software or the respondent or a conscious choice by the respondent to omit an item. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix G

Of note was the fact that although there were provisions for open responses and further comments on the survey (items III-17, IV-15, and V-20), there were no responses found on any of the 63 surveys returned. For this reason, reference to respondents' comments was not made during the analysis. Possible reasons for this lack of response may have been a time factor, given that superintendents typically have limited time to devote to external requests of this nature. The electronic format may have also caused the superintendents to be hesitant, or at a minimum, to

respond or to exercise discretion, given that school e-mails are considered public documents

Qualitative analysis procedures such as iterations and constant comparative methods were used to extrapolate, identify, and clarify subject strands from the interview data. These strands were highlighted and coded in the transcribed text of the interviews. "Coding is analysis"(Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.56). The texts were analyzed for exploratory and confirmatory purposes (Ryan & Bernard, 2000, p.789), and were compared across the interviews of search consultants and female superintendents and field notes, which were then combined to produce a composite portrait of an Iowa female superintendent. Each interview text was carefully examined as soon as it was transcribed to develop insight into the data. The questions, however, for the female superintendents were kept the same in order not to influence the interview process.

In order to make this discussion more meaningful to the reader, an overview of the search consultants and the search process as portrayed by them through their interviews will be presented. In addition, a similarly framed overview of the three female superintendents interviewed, including relevant field notes, will be presented in summary form. This is offered to give the reader more insight and to clarify the discussion.

### Overview of the Search Consultants and the Search Process

From a general perspective, all three search consultants were aware that there are fewer female superintendents than male superintendents in the state, but none were familiar with actual percentages. Each voiced concern that there were not more female candidates, but gave no indication that any special effort was being made to increase their numbers. One of the three firms indicated a 10 to 15% presence of female consultants on staff. This same firm receives specific requests from districts for female candidates. These requests, however, have come from states other than Iowa.

The three firms are competitive with one another, and often all three can be found making a sales presentation to a school board at the same meeting. The firms range from very small to a slickly run national recruiting firm. The bidding is fierce and costs run from about \$6,000 to above \$10,000 for a search. The search consultants' responsibilities include advertising the position, facilitating school and community focus groups to compile priority characteristics the community expects in a superintendent, application process, reference checks, working with the board to script interview questions, scheduling, screening, and when the choice is made, negotiating the new superintendent's contract. All three firms rely on networking with major organizations such as the Iowa School Board Association, School Administrators of Iowa and the American

Association of School Administrators. The search consultants stated that Iowa has about 60 superintendent vacancies a year. A trend toward internal promotions was noted by one of the search consultants:

A lot of districts in Iowa now are promoting inside. I can think of several jobs that I know that were open this year where they went ahead and just promoted the high school principal without even doing a search. It's a cost saving measure and the candidates are known to the school board.

There was a clear indication from all three job consultants that the primary allegiance of a search firm is to its employer, the school board. Each consultant indicated that the first task was to ascertain the priorities of the board. Focus groups were used in all three instances. The results of these group meetings were brought back to the board for prioritization. In responding to a question about whether women are shut out of the selection process because of their gender, one consultant addressed both that issue and also indicated how the process works:

Women are sometimes limited. I have heard that in non-closed meeting and one-on-one with individuals, [but] I've never heard that in all the work I've done with boards, sitting at the board table even in a closed session. What will happen sometimes is we'll get a call from the board member or board president and usually we only deal with the board president. If

it isn't the board president, we typically say, you know, you need to go through your board president and work with us because we lay that out when we're talking to [the board].

When asked about the pool of candidates, each consultant indicated their firms maintained a database, some sophisticated enough that electronic matches could be made by comparing the characteristics of the candidate and the needs of the district. In addition, consultants often ask school board to list candidates they might want to make application. The consultant then tries to recruit those candidates for the search.

Consensus from the three consultants was that the pool in Iowa is comprised of approximately 150 to 175 male and female candidates. The search consultants pointed out that not all these candidates are interested in every job; for example, some prefer a specific location, some prefer a certain-sized district, some prefer rural districts rather than urban districts, and so on. The consultants estimate that there are far fewer female candidates in the pool than males. One consultant said,

We go out and look hard for minorities, female minority candidates. And if somebody is an assistant superintendent some place and they apply for any job that we have, we go after them hard to bring them to any kind of job that fits a minority look.

The search consultants estimated that the applicant pool reflected the same ratio of females as compared to the number of female superintendents in the state. One consultant characterized the typical applicant pool for a district superintendency in the following way:

I would guess half of them [candidates] are current superintendents, 4 or 5 are assistant superintendents or curriculum people. Another 5 or 6 are currently principals who are aspiring, and 4 or 5 are people that you know--like I said, that are crackpots that you don't even know why they're applying for a job.

### Summary

Search consultants are primarily male. They are in charge of all aspects of the search and selection process. Their pool of superintendent candidates reflects about the same ratio of women as are presently serving as superintendents in the state. All three search consultants were vague in their awareness of the number of female candidates in search of a superintendency and their firm's efforts to recruit females. The school board president and the search consultant are the primary determiners as to which superintendent candidate is hired.

### Overview of the female superintendents interviewed

#### Observations from the field notes:

Each of the female superintendents was very willing to be interviewed. Each of the interviewees lived at least 2 hours from the researcher and they were willing to accommodate the researcher, by offering to meet her at a halfway point for the interview. The superintendents were well groomed and attentive to their appearance, and wore very little, if any, makeup or jewelry. Two of the superintendents were interviewed in their district on a Friday. Friday is often spirit day in schools, and both were wearing spirit t-shirts, which is not necessarily customary for superintendents. Both women maintained a professional appearance by also wearing blazers. They laughed often during their interviews and demonstrated a self-deprecating sense of humor. They were energetic, open, and articulate. They were assertive and held strong convictions about education and preferred to talk about issues rather than people. Their descriptions of their intent and their actions were decisive and focused. In the two districts visited by the interviewer, the employees encountered spoke highly of the superintendents and the superintendents' contributions to the district.

#### Interviews

For purposes of protecting the identities of these three superintendents they have been assigned fictitious names. Because there

are only 37 female superintendents in Iowa, revealing even the general location of their districts might compromise their identity. The women have been assigned the names of Sally, Jane, and Beverly. Their programs and insights have been described in general terms in order to protect their anonymity.

Each superintendent interviewed serves in a district of 700 to 1,000 students. The three districts are located in different parts of the Iowa. The ages of the three women superintendents interviewed was not directly asked, however each of them either directly or indirectly referred to their age during the conversation. Two of them were in their mid-fifties and the other was in her early sixties. One had held more than one position as superintendent, while the other two were in their first--and they predicted, only--superintendency. Beverly had accessed her first superintendency in her mid-forties and had been a superintendent for over ten years. These women shared a number of characteristics. Those characteristics that are not discussed within the research findings will be shared in a separate section that focuses on recurrent topics that emerged from the research.

### **Research Questions**

The overarching research question that guided this study was: What does it take for a woman to become a superintendent in Iowa? The following hypotheses were used to elicit data relevant to this question. The



responses to the survey question related to the specific hypotheses are listed with each of the respective 19 hypotheses. Qualitative data and researcher comments are included along with the data tables.

All of the 37 female superintendents in 2003-2004 were invited to respond to the survey. Twenty-seven of those women responded for a 72.9% response rate. Of the 37 randomly selected male superintendents practicing in the 2003-2004 school year, 36 responded for a 94.4% response rate. The overall response rate for the survey was 85.1%.

Five of the 19 hypotheses were rejected. Those hypotheses included:

- $H_o$  1 –Age at time of first superintendency for males and females in Iowa
- $H_o$  2--Marital status of male and female superintendents in Iowa
- $H_o$  4—Differences between male and female superintendents in Iowa by district population
- $H_o$  5—Differences in salary for male and female superintendents in Iowa
- $H_o$  8—Recruiter support for male and female superintendents in Iowa

The analysis of each hypotheses will now be discussed which will include the interweaving of findings from the qualitative research relative to that particular hypothesis.

### Hypothesis 1—Survey Item 4

There is no significant difference in age between males and females as to when they accessed their first superintendency. (REJECT)

In response to item 4 on the survey instrument, “Your age at the time of your first superintendency”, on average, the male superintendents who responded to this survey were younger than the female superintendents. The mean response was 42.75 years with a range of 29 to 56 years of age. Of the female superintendents responding to this survey question, the mean age was 45.89 years with a range of 34 to 59 years of age. At the time of their first superintendency, male superintendent respondents were significantly younger than female superintendent respondents.

Table 1: Age at time of first superintendency for males and females in Iowa

Group	N	Range in Years	Mean Difference
Male	36	29-56	2.89
Female	26	34-59	2.58

Table 2: t-test for age at time of first superintendency for males and females in Iowa

Groups	N	Mean	SD	t-value	prob.
Male	36	42.75	8.15	2.87	.004
Female	26	45.89	6.38		

The three female superintendents who were interviewed ranged from the early 50s to early 60s in age. Neither the interviews of the search consultants nor the female superintendents contributed further information about this particular hypothesis. One search consultant observed that legally age cannot be a consideration during the interview process, and that if it were a factor for a district, it would affect males and females in an equal manner.

#### Hypothesis 2: Survey Item 71

There is no significant difference between male and female superintendents in terms of marital status. (REJECT)

Because of the range of the numbers in the different categories (single, married, divorced, widow/widower and remarried) did not reflect any particular concentration in any of those categories, the initial data were collapsed into two categories: married and not married. A Chi Square analysis of the collapsed data indicated that there was a

significant difference in the marital status between male and female superintendents ( $p = \text{less than } .01$ ). Results indicated that 34 of the 36 (94%) male superintendent respondents were married, with only 17 of the 27 (52%) female respondents in a married relationship.

Table 3. Marital status of male and female superintendents in Iowa

Groups	N	Single	Married	Divorced	Widow/er	Remarried
Male	36	0	33	2	0	1
Female	27	2	14	5	3	3

Table 4. Chi Square test for marital status of male and female superintendents in Iowa

Groups	N	Married	Not Married
Male	36	34	2
Female	27	17	10

$$\chi^2 = \chi(1) = 9.92, p < .01$$

Although all three of the female superintendents who were interviewed had been divorced, two were remarried. Marital status was not mentioned by any of the search consultants as a determining factor for boards in the selection process.

#### Hypothesis 3— Survey Item 1

There is no significant difference between male and female superintendents in terms of level of education. (FAILED TO REJECT)

Analysis of the data was preceded by coding the responses, assigning the highest numerical value to the highest degree obtained (Doctoral Degree). There was no statistical difference between the groups in this area. Thirty-one of the 36 males (86%) who responded to this question indicated an Education Specialist Degree or above, with 15 (42%) holding a Doctoral Degree. Twenty-five of the 27 females (92%) who responded to this question indicated an Educational Specialist Degree, or above, with 11 (40%) holding a Doctoral Degree.

The three female superintendents interviewed all had held a doctoral degree for a number of years. In addition they all had strong foundations in mathematics, which they attributed as more of an asset than having a doctorate. Jane intimated this insight with regard to a superintendency that she was seeking:

. . . Now they pooh-pooh doctorates. They aren't very important anymore because affability is more—affability is more important than intelligence or the ability to do research and those kinds of things.

Beverly also indicated that a doctoral degree is not a deciding factor for people attaining a superintendent position and connected the reason for that to budgetary considerations with the assumption that hiring a candidate with a doctorate would be more expensive for the district. She observed, "The doctorate is no longer as respected as it once was. Boards

are looking to save money and . . . people skills are the critical attribute that boards now seek.” One of the search consultants added a caveat to the diminishing importance of the doctoral degree in job selection, stating that in order to access a larger school, a doctoral degree would be expected.

Table 5. Difference in educational level of Iowa superintendents by gender

Groups	Master's	Ed. Specialist	Doctorate
Male	5	16	15
Female	2	14	11
Total	7	30	26

Table 6. Mann Whitney test by gender of levels of education of Iowa superintendents

Groups	N	SS	Exp.SS	SD	Mean	Stat.	P-Value
Male	36	1137.50	1152.0	65.221	31.597	878.500	.8307
Female	27	878.50	864.0	65.221	32.537		

Table 7. Frequency results of male and female superintendents in Iowa by district population

District Enrollment	<500	501-1000	1001-2000	2001-3000	3001-4000	4001-5000	>5000
Male	1	10	12	3	1	3	6
Female	7	9	5	4	1	1	0

#### Hypothesis 4—Survey Item 10

There is no significant difference between male and female superintendents in terms of the student population of districts in which they serve. (REJECT)

Survey Item 10 asked the superintendents to select a response that best described the number of students served in their districts. Data were coded prior to analysis with a numerical system that assigned the largest value to the highest populated districts. There is a significant statistical difference between males and females in this category.

Table 8. Mann Whitney test for male and female superintendents by district population in Iowa

Groups	N	SS	Exp.SS	SD	Mean	Stat.	P-Value
Male	36	1336.00	1152.0	70.107	37.111	680.000	.0089
Female	27	680.00	864.0	70.107	25.185		

All three search consultants indicated that women stand a better chance of being hired by larger districts. They attributed this to the possibility that larger districts are more open to women as leaders than districts located in smaller communities (and in their reasoning) more conservative communities. Further study in this area could reveal why women are currently underrepresented in larger school districts in the Iowa.

#### Hypothesis 5—Survey Item 13

There is no significant difference between male and female superintendents in terms of salary. (REJECT)

Table 9. Frequency results of differences in salary for male and female superintendents in Iowa

Group	\$60K or less	\$60-69,000	\$70-79,999	\$80-89,999	\$90-99,999	\$100K or +
Males	0	0	1	10	7	18
Females	3	2	6	5	8	3
Total	3	2	7	15	15	21

Although the results of the test indicate that there is a statistical difference between male and female superintendents in this category there is a possibility that the disparity could be even greater than these data suggest.



1. The question did not address a benefit package, only salary. Salary may only be the “tip of the iceberg” with regard to benefits. Other things not covered in the salaries could include the use of a car, housing, contributions to a 401K or other retirement plan, insurance benefits, professional memberships and travel expenses.
1. Only one woman superintendent surveyed served a district of over 4,500 students. According to the Iowa Department of Education statistics, larger districts typically offer higher salaries; therefore the issue of a gender difference is not so important as the size of the district.

Table 10. Mann Whitney test for differences in salary for male and female superintendents in Iowa

Groups	N	SS	Exp.SS	SD	Mean	Stat.	P-Value
Male	36	1408.0	1152.0	69.609	39.111	608.000	.0002
Female	27	606.0	864.0	69.609	22.518		

No important information was uncovered in either the search consultant interviews or the female superintendent interviews relevant to this hypothesis.

### Hypothesis 6—Survey Item 3

There is no significant difference between male and female superintendents in terms of professional experience. (FAILED TO REJECT)

Respondents were asked to indicate the number of administrative positions held prior to accessing a superintendent position.

Table 11. Frequency of responses to number of administrative positions held by males and females prior to accessing a superintendency

Groups	N	Mean	SD
Males	36	2.56	2.49
Females	27	2.74	2.38

Table 12. Mann Whitney test for difference in professional experience between male and female superintendents in Iowa

Groups	N	Mean	SD	DF	t-Value	pr less than t
Male	36	2.5556	2.4893	61	-0.30	.7669
Female	27	2.7407	2.3793			

From these data, it can be concluded that there is no significant gender difference in the number of administrative positions for which respondents applied and the hypothesis has been supported.

One of the consultants spoke in a general way about experience:

I think quality over the past two years has slipped, simply because, and when I say quality again, I'm not talking about individuals. I'm talking about general pool of experiences

Another consultant added

Some boards get hung up on experience, but in all the searches that we've done, experience has not been a requirement. And we've done some pretty large districts. And you know, 10 or 25 years ago that was unheard of. A lot of the male applicants are without experience and a lot of them are high school principals.

Each of the female superintendents was professionally well qualified. Sally noted, "As a woman you need to be twice as good to get half as much". Jane neither agreed or disagreed with that observation, stating instead:

"I can say that I haven't met any—any women that I wondered how they got to be superintendent. And I have met men I've wondered that about. That's my only evidence."

### Hypothesis 7—Survey Item 9

There is no significant difference between male and female superintendents in terms of the length of time it takes to access superintendency. (FAILED TO REJECT)

The table below shows the number of respondents who selected each of the options in Item 9 by gender.

Table 13. Frequency results comparing males and females in length of time to access a superintendency in Iowa

Group	<1 yr.	1 yr.	2 yrs.	3 yrs.	4+yrs.	Total
Male	23	5	2	1	5	36
Female	15	3	7	1	1	27
Total	38	8	9	2	6	63

The responses to this question were coded for analysis with the highest number being assigned to the longest interval of time needed to access the position of superintendent. Of the superintendents responding to the survey, 55 (87.3%) of the 63 respondents were able to access a position in 2 years or less. Males and females were evenly distributed in this area, with 25 (92.6%) of the females accessing a position in 2 years or less, and 30 (83.3%) of the males. Five (13.9%) of the male respondents took four years or longer and only one female (3.7%) required that amount of time to attain a position.

Table 14. Mann Whitney test for length of time to access a superintendency for males and females in Iowa

Groups	N	SS	Exp.SS	SD	Mean	Stat.	P-Value
Male	36	1122.0	1152.0	63.380	31.166	894.000	.6416
Female	27	894.0	864.0	63.380	33.111		

Search consultants who were interviewed agreed that the application process is demanding, however they noted that both women and men can expect to make several applications and go through several interviews before accessing a position. One consultant noted that, “It would not be unusual to apply half a dozen times before you get a job”. Another consultant added that the “bulk” of their candidates remain in the database for more than one year.

#### Hypothesis 8—Survey Item 45

There is no significant difference between male and female superintendents in terms of recruiter support. (REJECT)

The survey item asked responders to rank the importance of search consultant/recruiter support. The table below shows the frequency of responses to that item. One male superintendent did not respond to this item.

Table 15. Frequency results of recruiter support for male and female superintendents in Iowa

Groups	Very low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High	Total
Male	6	6	11	8	4	35
Female	7	6	6	5	3	27
Total	13	12	17	13	7	62

Twenty-three males (65.7%) responded that the support was “moderate”, “high” or “very high” compared to 14 females (51.9%) responding in those same categories. Six males (17.1%) and 7 females (25.9%) indicated that recruiter support was “very low”.

Data were coded assigning the highest numerical value to the strongest support levels. The importance of the search consultant was emphasized by all three search consultants. One of the consultants shared this story about how a consultant can lead a school board toward hiring a particular candidate.

I think that this sounds terrible, but I what I’ve learned is that you can kind of lead the board to whom you believe are the top two [candidates]—they’ll pick the top five just from the comments they make when you’re going through these reports with them. And then I think they rely heavily on the consultants.

Another consultant intimated that the consultant works to meet the school board's wishes:

Now this is confidential information. The last question we always ask school boards after we have gone through the process of trying to figure out what kind of a candidate they're looking for is: Do you know of anybody that you'd really like us to go after?

A search consultant shared this story about how school boards may be influenced:

In a [2002-2003] search of [a large urban Iowa district], the consultant came in and told the board what they needed to look for. The consultant said, "You don't need a lightning rod in this community. You need someone who sits in his office and thinks and administrates, and someone who will not be in the public eye." Four of the seven board members told me that story, and you know what? They hired just that type of candidate.

Networking is a tool for candidates to access the "stable" or resources of a recruiting firm. This story was shared by one of the search consultants:

I watched [Mr. Smith] try to get inside a certain stable. Could not get inside. Why, I don't know. Couldn't get to level one

as far as being taken in as a semi-finalist anywhere. When he applied with another firm, his first time, he was taken in as a semi-finalist and secured the job. So I think it is the network you build with the search consultant more than anything. Now that sounds terrible, but I really believe it is.

Other stories by the search consultants offered insight as to how a firm is accessed.

I'd say number one it takes some networking. I really believe that. When I look at how the search consultants work, I think you would need to be in their network to get a job. I will use a search conducted in 2002-2003 for an example. Three larger districts were looking for superintendents that year and the same consultant handled all three. He took five people into District X, four of the same five into District Y and three of the five into District Z.

A search consultant shared this insight about recruiting and supporting candidates and some of the rationale behind the choices the firms make.

We actually recruit people. I mean, we just don't sit back and let people send in applications. We actually go out and recruit. So in my opinion, it is not the board that is the gatekeeper, it is the consulting firm. We do our confidential



research and then bring in 10 people we believe, and I've sat in enough of those meetings where 5 or 6 people sitting around the table will argue who the ten were, that they are going to take in. The firm doesn't want to look bad because you know, the job is going to open in 4 or 5 years again and so you want the work and so the gatekeeper is the consultant.

All three search consultants interviewed indicated their interest in recruiting females. Some consultants felt they were successful by including a woman in the finalist pool. One noted that occasionally a school board (outside of Iowa) will request women candidates be included. On the other hand, one consultant indicated an occasional surreptitious request not to include women in the interview process in Iowa. None of the three consultants indicated any special efforts on their parts to recruit women.

Table 16. Mann Whitney test for recruiter support comparing male and female superintendents in Iowa

Groups	N	SS	Exp.SS	SD	Mean	Stat.	P-Value
Male	35	1161.0	1102.5	68.743	33.171	792.000	.3988
Female	27	792.0	850.50	68.743	29.333		

Table 17 Frequency results comparing family and friends' support for male and female superintendents in Iowa

Group	Very low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High	Total
Male	2	1	5	14	14	36
Female	1	3	3	10	10	27
Total	3	4	8	24	24	63

#### Hypothesis 9—Survey Item 64

There is no significant difference between male and female superintendents in

terms of family and friends' support for the position. (FAILED TO REJECT)

The percentages in the area of “high” and “very high” indicate that 28 of the 36 males surveyed (77.8%) and 20 of the 27 females surveyed (74.1%) felt supported in their work as superintendents.

This survey did not provide for indicating the source of the support, simply requesting if the respondents felt supported by either friends or family. Of interest, however, is the data from hypotheses 2, in which females were not married at the same rate as the male respondents.

Data were coded assigning the highest numerical value to the strongest support levels. The hypothesis is supported.

Table 18. Mann Whitney test comparing family and friends' support for male and female superintendents in Iowa

Groups	N	SS	Exp.SS	SD	Mean	Stat.	P-Value
Male	36	1173.0	1152.0	67.819	32.583	843.000	.7624
Female	27	843.0	864.0	67.819	31.222		

All three search consultants indicated that family support is critical in both accessing and being successful in the superintendency. Each of the female superintendents interviewed seemed to have struck a balance between her personal and professional life and from outward appearances seemed to be well adjusted and happy. There were frequent positive references to family in each of their interviews. One mentioned adjusting her schedule so that she and her husband could spend more time together and another doted on her grown children's accomplishments. Sally shared how she felt supported by her husband who had taken an early retirement in order to move with her to her superintendent position. Beverly also mentioned the support of her spouse who was willing to have a "weekend relationship" with her because her job was too distant from her home.

### Hypothesis 10—Survey Item 65

There is no significant difference between male and female superintendents in terms of the support from a network. (FAILED TO REJECT)

Table 19 Frequency results comparing level of network support for male and female superintendents in Iowa

Group	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High	Total
Male	2	2	8	13	11	36
Female	1	2	7	10	7	27
Total	3	4	15	23	18	63

Thirty-two males (88.9%) and 24 females (89.9%) did not differ significantly in their feeling of support in the “moderate”, “high”, and “very high” categories of support.

Data were coded for analysis assigning higher numerical values to the feeling of stronger support. The hypothesis is supported.

Table 20. Mann Whitney test for level of network support comparing male and female superintendents in Iowa

Groups	N	SS	Exp.SS	SD	Mean	Stat.	P-Value
Male	36	1176.50	1152.0	68.848	32.680	839.500	.7274
Female	27	839.50	864.0	68.848	31.092		

Networking was viewed as very important in accessing superintendency by all three search consultants. One of them expressed it this way:

I think being in the stable of the recruiter or consultant is valuable. As I said before, I think that is a number one priority. How do you get into the stable? You go to the leaders of the search firm and you visit with them, and you go to lunch with them and you make contact at professional workshops and meetings and you make sure that you have a drink with them after the meetings. And when they open up your application, they say, ah... I know [her]. And that makes a difference. I don't care who it is . . . so the more you know the recruiters, I think the better off—the easier it is for you to get into the network, because I think they want to take known quantities into boards. I can take this person in and they won't embarrass me.

The female superintendents did not seem to view the concept of networks in the same manner, as the search consultants. Networking to search consultants indicated an entry point into a group that, once familiar, entitled the member to certain privileges. To paraphrase the implication of the search consultants, networks are used as entry points or to facilitate connections with a search firm. Females spoke of networks as more exclusionary, and discussed the “good old boy network”. All three of the women conceded that the old-boy network is

still highly influential in education. Sally shared her early experiences about the advantage of belonging to the network. She observed:

I know that any male who had my credentials would have been recruited. Because I saw my colleagues. And I'd hear the conversation. But I was never in the good old boy, the whole athletic thing. I don't have the kind of good old boy—go shake their hand, meet them--and I still don't because I'm not very comfortable in that realm.

These observations on the part of the female superintendents indicate that there seems to be a difference as to how the search consultants and the female superintendents define networking. Networking to female superintendents represented here meant an outreach by the good old boys to offer professional opportunities.

#### Hypothesis 11—Survey Item 58

There is no significant difference between male and female superintendents in terms of being mentored. (FAILED TO REJECT)

Table 21. Frequency results comparing levels of mentoring between male and female superintendents in Iowa

Group	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High	Total
Male	5	8	7	11	5	36
Female	3	6	9	5	4	27
Total	8	14	16	16	9	63

Approximately the same percentage of male and female respondents indicated “very low”: 5 males (13.9%), 3 females (11.1%) for mentor support with “low” support receiving the same percent response (22.2%) from 8 males and 6 females. Distribution of perceptions of support continued to be approximately equal across the “moderate”, “high”, and “very high” areas.

Data were coded for analysis, assigning lowest numerical values to the least support gained through a mentor.

Table 22. Mann Whitney test for comparing mentor support for male and female superintendents in Iowa

Groups	N	SS	Exp.SS	SD	Mean	Stat.	P-Value
Male	36	1166.50	1152.0	70.233	32.402	849.50	.8420
Female	27	849.50	864.0	70.233	31.462		

Search consultants all agreed that mentors are of critical importance in moving a career forward, and in accessing superintendency. Each female superintendent indicated having one or more mentors along their career path who made a significant contribution to their career advancement. In each case the mentor was a man or men. Only one of the three superintendents mentioned that she had both strong males and females as mentors. According to the superintendents, these mentors

served as encouragers and sometimes created opportunities for the females to get positions that would not have otherwise been available. The mentors ranged from administrators to college professors. Sally described her experience about a key mentor:

One of my mentors was a search consultant. He negotiated opportunities for me to be in a position of professional leadership at meetings. I felt like he was purposely trying to develop me, and he would always be encouraging and urge me to continue trying.

#### Hypothesis 12—Survey Item 41

There is no significant difference between male and female superintendents in terms of self-confidence. (FAILED TO REJECT)

Frequency results were collapsed for this item because there were no responses in the “very low” and “low” categories.

Table 23. Frequency results comparing levels of self confidence between male and female superintendents in Iowa

Group	Moderate	High	Very High	Total
Male	1	18	17	36
Female	0	13	14	27
Total	1	31	31	63

No female superintendents and only one male superintendent indicated a feeling of “moderate” self-confidence on the survey. The



responses were evenly distributed with approximately half of each group perceiving themselves as “high” in self-confidence and the other half rating themselves as “very high” in this perception.

Data were coded for analysis with higher numerical values being assigned to higher perceptions of self-confidence. The hypothesis is supported.

Table 24. Mann Whitney test for comparing level of self confidence between male and female superintendents in Iowa

Groups	N	SS	Exp.SS	SD	Mean	Stat.	P-Value
Male	36	1123.0	1152.0	62.846	31.194	893.000	.6502
Female	27	893.0	864.0	62.846	33.074		

In each interview situation the field notes reflected comments about the self-assured manner that the female that the female superintendents conducted themselves. The two female superintendents who were interviewed in their districts were wearing t-shirts bearing the name of the school mascot to support their team, which was construed by the researcher as an act of uninhibited self-assurance. It was also interpreted as a gesture of role modeling for staff and students. They were observed to be self-assured in their body language and in their demeanor with other employees. Each indicated during the interviews that they needed self-confidence as they had moved forward with their careers. Each

superintendent seemed able to separate personal and professional issues. Each spoke of her hardships and challenges in a matter-of-fact manner. They each spoke of attaining goals.

#### Hypothesis 13—Survey Item 42

There is no significant difference between male and female superintendents in terms of perseverance. (FAILED TO REJECT)

The frequency data were collapsed because no respondents rated perseverance as less than moderately important for a superintendent's job performance

Table 25. Frequency results comparing levels of perseverance between male and female superintendents in Iowa.

Group	Moderate	High	Very High	Total
Male	1	18	17	36
Female	0	13	14	27
Total	1	31	31	63

Thirty-five of 36 males ranked themselves as “high” (36.1%) or “very high” (58.3%) in terms of perseverance for a total of 97.2%. All 27 females ranked themselves “high” (30.1%) or “very high” (65.4%) for a 100% total response.

Data were coded with higher numerical values being assigned to the higher levels of importance of perseverance. The hypothesis is supported.

Table 26. Mann Whitney test for comparing level of perseverance between male and female superintendents in Iowa

Groups	N	SS	Exp.SS	SD	Mean	Stat.	P-Value
Male	36	1099.50	1134.0	59.933	30.541	853.500	.5705
Female	26	853.50	819.0	59.933	32.826		

The consultants were in agreement that perseverance is a critical attribute for both males and females. They acknowledged, for example, “making applications is stressful and time consuming”.

The data from Hypothesis 7 indicated that it took 87.3% of the respondents two years or less to access a superintendency. Securing a position as superintendent offered challenges for each of the three women. Their stories testify to the fact that persistence is a critical attribute for women who wish to become superintendents. One woman was a principal of a very large Iowa high school. Her salary was higher than that being offered in several of the superintendencies for which she applied. Because she was willing to take a pay cut, boards considered her suspect. Using a circuitous route, she finally took a lower-paying principalship in a smaller district and then became a successful internal candidate for the superintendency in that district.

One female superintendent was a finalist completing interviews in eight districts during one year before successfully obtaining superintendency. She remembered:

It was a very grueling semester because I applied eight places. And I got interviews in all of them and then, you know, I picked places that were closer to my parents. My mother needs support. It was quite the road to have to do all that while I was working full-time and do all those applications. It is like writing a dissertation, I think, because you have to do things differently every time. Every district has different questions, a different community feel. You have to go to it. You have to research it. You have to read everything on the web and then you have to write an application that's geared to that. And I think that's one reason why I got the interviews.

#### Hypothesis 14—Survey Item 33

There is no significant difference between male and female superintendents in terms of job experience leading up to superintendency.

(FAILED TO REJECT)

Data results were collapsed because no respondents ranked the quantity job experience as “very low” in importance in accessing the position of superintendent.

Table 27. Frequency results comparing amount of job experience leading up to the superintendency between male and female superintendents in Iowa

Group		Moderate	High	Very High	Total
Male	2	10	16	8	36
Female	2	5	16	4	27
Total	4	15	32	12	63

Job experience was defined as the number of years of administrative experience, which could be construed as an important attribute to possess in order to access a superintendent position. Males and females displayed a difference of opinion as to the importance of the quantity of administrative job experience with 7 females (25.9%) rating it as a “low” or “moderate” in importance in comparison to 12 males (33.3%) holding that opinion. 20 females (74.1%) rated this priority as “high” or “very high” compared with 24 males (66.7%).

Data were assigned a numerical value with the highest value being assigned to this attribute being a high priority. With a P-Value of .9940, the hypothesis is not supported.

The qualitative research data from both the search consultants and the female superintendents did not yield further insight into the results for this hypothesis.

Table 28. Mann Whitney test for comparing males and females in the amount of job experience leading up to a superintendency in Iowa

Groups	N	SS	Exp.SS	SD	Mean	Stat.	P-Value
Male	36	1153.0	1152.0	66.322	32.027	863.000	.9940
Female	27	863.0	864.0	66.322	31.962		

#### Hypothesis 15—Survey Item 29

There is no significant difference between male and female superintendents in terms of the considered importance of compatibility with the school board. (FAILED TO REJECT)

Data frequency results were collapsed because no respondents indicated that compatibility with the school board was of “very low” or “low” importance. One female superintendent did not respond to this survey item.

Table 29. Frequency results comparing the perceived levels of compatibility with the school board between male and female superintendents in Iowa

Group	Moderate	High	Very High	Total
Male	2	8	26	36
Female	0	9	17	26
Total	2	17	43	62

Eight of 36 male respondents (34.6%) and 9 of the 26 female respondents (22.2%) rated the compatibility with the school board as “high” in importance. Twenty-six of the 36 male respondents (72.2%) and 17 of the 26 female respondents (65.4%) indicated that compatibility with the school board was “very high” in importance. Convergence of the data from interviews with both the female superintendents and the search consultants indicated that this was a high priority in accessing and maintaining a superintendency.

Table 30. Mann Whitney test comparing the perceived levels of compatibility with the school board between male and female superintendents in Iowa

Groups	N	SS	Exp.SS	SD	Mean	Stat.	P-Value
Male	36	1157.0	1134.0	56.338	32.138	796.000	.6896
Female	26	796.0	819.0	56.338	30.615		

All three female superintendents have experienced or anticipated problems with their school boards. In describing their situations, the researcher determined that the details of their stories could compromise the women’s identities. In this discussion section, therefore, the three different women are identified only as “superintendents”.

The first story is about collecting favors. When a minority board member stepped forward during the hiring process and threatened to “go public” with the board’s sexist refusal in closed session to hire a woman,

the board reconsidered and hired the female candidate. At the time of the interview this board member was attempting to hold the superintendent “hostage”, expecting certain district decisions to be made in his favor because he was responsible for the school board hiring her. The superintendent indicated that she is unwilling to compromise her actions.

Eventually I realized that he was kind of bullying me. There was little psychological stuff. And finally I said to him at one point--because he was also the Mr. Accountability Guy--I said to him, you know. I’m not accountable to you. I’m accountable to the board as a whole, but I’m not accountable to you as a person.

One of the superintendents has maintained balanced budgets for the past seven years, procured approximately \$850,000 in grant funding for district programs, and began a highly successful preschool. The new school board members, elected in the fall of 2003, chose a new board president. Shortly after becoming president, he stated publicly that he “would not work with a woman”. In the spring of 2004, despite her record as a successful leader, the board voted not to give her a raise. As a result, she decided to retire at the end of the 2004-2005 school year. Her thoughts about this situation demonstrate both her professional energy and caring for her family:



If I were a little younger, I would have made this work. In fact, to tell you the truth, the board meetings are starting to go pretty good and he's even looking to me for advice and so on. But I think in another year I'm going to thank him, because I guess I was sort of looking for an excuse to—I don't see my grandchildren—my little ones, you know.

The third superintendent indicated that she anticipates a problem with her school board next year. A staff member, whom she has confronted with regard to professional issues, has announced that he is retiring and intends to run for the school board with a stated agenda of retribution toward the superintendent.

When describing these situations, the collective response was similar in the case of each of the female superintendents. They regard these situations as part of what they face as women, and as superintendents. When asked, the superintendents indicated that they feel they receive more challenges from staff because of their gender.

#### Hypothesis 16—Survey Item 35

There is no significant difference between male and female superintendents in terms of the considered importance of managerial skills. (FAILED TO REJECT)

Managerial skills were defined on the survey instrument as “knowing how to do things” which was contrasted with leadership skills being defined as “knowing what to do”. The frequency data results were collapsed because no respondents indicated that managerial skills were considered “very low” in importance. Two male superintendents did not respond to this question.

Table 31. Frequency results comparing the considered importance of managerial skills between male and female superintendents in Iowa

Group	Low	Moderate	High	Very High	Total
Male	1	2	16	15	34
Female	0	3	16	8	27
Total	1	5	32	23	61

Thirty-one of 34 males (91.2%) rated managerial skills slightly higher in importance than did 24 of the 27 (88.9%) females. Although no females assigned managerial skills a “low” rating, the response rate in the “low” to “moderate” importance levels were approximately equal with 3 males responding (8.8%) and 3 females (11.1%) responding in this category.

Data were assigned numerical values with “very high” receiving the highest value. The hypothesis is supported.

Table 32. Mann Whitney test comparing the considered importance of managerial skills between male and female superintendents in Iowa

Groups	N	SS	Exp.SS	SD	Mean	Stat.	P-Value
Male	34	1119.0	1054.0	61.663	32.911	772.000	.2956
Female	27	772.0	837.0	61.663	28.592		

#### Hypothesis 17—Survey Item 36

There is no significant difference between male and female superintendents in terms of the considered importance of leadership skills.

(FAILED TO REJECT)

Table 33. Frequency results comparing the considered importance of leadership skills between male and female superintendents in Iowa

Group	High	Very High	Total
Male	5	30	35
Female	4	23	27
Total	9	53	62

One male superintendent did not respond to this item. As stated in hypothesis 16, managerial and leadership skills were defined on the survey instrument to clarify the questions. No respondents assigned leadership skills a “very low”, “low” or “moderate “ rating; therefore the frequency data table was collapsed to reflect only “high” and “very high” responses. Data were nearly identical for these results in the higher categories with 5 of 35 males (14.3%) and 4 of 27 females (14.8%)

indicating that leadership skills are of “high” importance. Thirty of 35 males (85.7%) and 23 of 27 females (85.2%) indicated that leadership skills are “very high in importance.

Table 34. Mann Whitney test comparing the considered importance of leadership skills between male and female superintendents in Iowa

Groups	N	SS	Exp.SS	SD	Mean	Stat.	P-Value
Male	35	1105.0	1102.5	42.981	31.571	848.000	.9629
Female	27	848.0	850.5	42.981	31.407		

Data were analyzed by coding the ratings by assigning a higher numerical value to the higher levels of importance accorded to this skill. The hypothesis is supported.

Leadership skills were considered of prime importance by all three of the search consultants. Leadership was also valued by each of the three superintendents interviewed. A recurrent theme in the interviews with the female superintendents was their expressed opinion that if they couldn't lead, they would move to another district. Two of the three women also discussed the need for challenge in their lives, and that leading school districts toward significant change held importance for them.

These women did not discuss the nurturing side of education so much as they looked at systems improvement. They talked in terms of their programs that met needs in the community, new infrastructure that

they had supported and had monitored and how they were focusing the district on curricular and student achievement issues. Jane referred to her priority of using a systems approach as “establishing a school district instead of a district of schools”. Sally made the following appraisal of her situation:

There was no instructional leadership anywhere when I got here. The guy who was here just occupied the office and got a salary and I don't know what the hell he did, because when I came, he hadn't done anything for years. 1984 was the last time there was a comprehensive board policy review. One of my skills is supply-side financing and I've really been able to use that skill here because they were just the opposite here-- they were cut, cut, cutting everything and just, you know, the guy who was here before me didn't know what the hell he was doing.

Each of the female superintendents viewed themselves as change agents and considered themselves assertive and aggressive in bringing about program and systemic change. They considered their success to be a combination of good qualifications, leadership capabilities, and to being in the right place at the right time. Although they did not refer to themselves as daring, the description of their actions over the years

defines them, in the opinion of the researcher, as dynamic and innovative leaders.

All of the women viewed their attraction to education because of the challenge it offered. Jane clearly articulated her goals focused on improved student achievement.

I'm trying to make it [the district] very academic. It's way behind. It's probably—they're talking about the things at high school that we [former district] talked about in '90 or '91.

Beverly reminisced about a state-wide consortium she put together.

We did all of our communication over the ICN. Every Wednesday morning, I mean we did marvelous things together. The lady we hired to run our grant eventually headed up the state program. And one of my board presidents said, "Your strength is in hiring good people."

And I'm also very strong in budgets. I think that's where most women are weak, but that's my strength—budgets.

Beverly shared another story about her leadership and the joy she took in bringing about positive change.

People compared me to a kayak. 'Everybody get on the boat and go downstream, but Beverly's in the kayak up there and I can just see her splashing'. (The consultant used to say that, and then all the superintendents would laugh.) 'I can

hear splashing again, you know' (when I came up with another idea). And we did fantastic things together.

Hypothesis 18—Survey Item 39

There is no significant difference between male and female superintendents in terms of the importance attached to political savvy.

(FAILED TO REJECT)

Table 35. Frequency results comparing perceived importance of political savvy between male and female superintendents in Iowa

Group	Low	Moderate	High	Very High	Total
Male	1	3	14	18	36
Female	0	3	14	10	27
Total	1	6	28	28	63

Political savvy indicates a shrewdness and practical knowledge, in how to get things accomplished. Frequency results were collapsed because no respondents indicated a “very low” rating for political savvy. An equal percentage of male and female respondents ranked political savvy as either “high” or “very high” in importance. Thirty-two of 36 male respondents (88.9%) indicated a “high” or “very high” rating of the importance of this item as compared to 24 of 27 female respondents (88.9%).

Data were coded for analysis by assigning higher numerical values to the higher rankings in the responses. There was no

significant difference in how male and female superintendents responded to this survey question. The hypothesis is supported.

Table 36. Mann Whitney test for comparing the perceived importance of political savvy between male and female superintendents in Iowa

Groups	N	SS	Exp.SS	SD	Mean	Stat.	P-Value
Male	36	1206.50	1152.0	65.347	33.513	809.500	.4086
Female	27	809.50	864.0	65.347	29.981		

Both search consultants and female superintendents indicated that political savvy was an important attribute for all superintendents. It was considered a key skill that was necessary to survival in the role of superintendent and to maintain leadership.

#### Hypothesis 19—Survey Item 28

There is no significant difference between male and female superintendents in terms of the importance given to philosophy about the profession. (FAILED TO REJECT)

Table 37. Frequency results comparing perceived importance about philosophy of the profession between male and female superintendents in Iowa

Group	Low	Moderate	High	Very High	Total
Male	0	5	15	16	36
Female	2	2	15	8	27
Total	2	7	30	24	63



There were no respondents who indicated that philosophy about the profession was “low” in importance therefore the table reflecting the data was collapsed to reflect only those areas in which there were responses. Thirty-one of the 36 (86.1%) male respondents indicated a belief that philosophy about the profession was “high” or “very high” in importance as compared to 23 of the 27 female respondents (85.2%).

Data were coded for analysis by assigning a high numerical value to rankings that were high in importance. With a P-Value of .2944, the hypothesis is supported.

Table 38. Mann Whitney test for comparing the perceived importance of professional philosophy between male and female superintendents in Iowa.

Groups	N	SS	Exp.SS	SD	Mean	Stat.	P-Value
Male	36	1221.50	1152.0	65.813	33.930	794.500	.2944
Female	27	794.50	864.0	65.813	29.425		

Search consultants did not consider philosophy of education as an important determiner in whether someone was chosen for a superintendent position, indicating that “boards don’t care about philosophy, they care about action”. Female superintendents seemed to have difficulty separating this characteristic from other ways of doing business and therefore did not consider this an important factor.

### Representation of the Iowa Superintendent Population in this Survey

Table 39. Confidence Intervals and levels for survey results

Population	N	Response N	Response rate (%)	Confidence interval	Confidence Level
Superintendents	351	74	21.8	13.3	99
Superintendent survey population	74	63	85.1	6.2	99
Female superintendents surveyed	37	26	72.9	13	99
Male superintendents surveyed	37	36	94.1	3	99

To address the reliability of the responses the following statistics were prepared using the Sample Size Calculator that was presented on the Internet as a public service of Creative Research Systems (<http://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm#factors>). The confidence level is defined as the range of values, consistent with the data, that is believed to encompass the true value with high probability (usually 95%). Wider intervals indicate lower precision, narrow intervals, and greater precision. (<http://www.consort-statement.org/confidenceinterval.htm>). The confidence interval used was 99% which reflected a higher probability rate than the usual 95% as cited previously. The web-based Zoomerang survey allowed the researcher to track the demographics of the responders and non-

responders. In the case of the female superintendents, the non-responders to the survey were found to represent no particular demographic area. It is reasonable to conclude that the data received from respondents to this survey were representative of the populations of which they were a part.

#### Summary of the quantitative findings

Five of the null hypotheses were not supported by the research. Hypotheses 4 and 5 stated that there were no significant differences between men and women in terms of the size of district served and the amount of salary earned. Male superintendents serve in larger districts, with only one surveyed female superintendent serving in a district with an enrollment greater than 4500 students. A logical corollary to Hypothesis 4 is the finding in Hypothesis 5, which states that males and females receive commensurate salaries. Larger districts typically pay higher salaries than smaller districts. Men also access their first superintendency on average at an age approximately three years younger than do women as indicated in the data collected around Hypothesis 1. Data from Hypothesis 8 indicated that males and females differed in their perception of recruiter/search consultant support with 25% of the female respondents indicating “very low” recruiter support. Data from Hypothesis 2 indicated that female

superintendents are 40% less likely to be married than their male colleagues.

Qualitative data indicated that search consultants and board presidents are gatekeepers to accessing a superintendency. In the analysis of the qualitative data recurrent findings were apparent which may help to answer the question of what it takes for a woman to be a superintendent in Iowa. These findings are elaborated in the following discussion.

#### Qualitative findings

Through iterations with matrixes and the constant comparative process other recurrent strands became apparent. Issues and characteristics such as being place-bound, and knowledge of sports, particularly football, and new phenomena also surfaced through the iterations, including the bias encountered in women's careers and the serendipitous nature of women's career progression.

#### Place-bound

Place bound indicates an inability for a person to move to a new location in order to take a job. Being place bound can affect either males or females. It was apparent from the interviews that not being place bound is an important characteristic for aspiring superintendents. According to one search consultant, a female superintendent candidate who is not place-bound may even have an advantage over a male. When asked to

clarify this idea, the consultant responded that he felt women's credibility in superintendent leadership is rising.

I would say that I honestly believe that women that want to become superintendents and they're willing to move and go anywhere in the state, have an excellent maybe a better chance even than males do at this time.

The interviews with the female superintendents demonstrated a common theme of career advancement attributed to the fact that they were not place bound. They indicated that there is no future for females who cannot or will not relocate in order to access a new position. Each of the three female superintendents discussed not being tied to one geographic location. One noted:

To a certain extent I was place bound, but if you're going to make yourself place bound, you're never going to get anywhere. I mean, you just figure that. I know several women right now that are certified as superintendents and their husbands have jobs and so they are place bound and can't get a superintendency.

Jane and Beverly noted that being willing to relocate is important for both accessing a superintendency and also for career advancement. Jane was particularly adamant in her advocacy for avoiding being place bound.

Leave quicker. Don't stay on a job for more than two years. I really don't respect people that continue after the two or three years. ... You'll never see—you never look at the problems, you never recreate, you never redefine, you never have to rebuilding when you're riding on the high.

Beverly reiterated that being place bound is a deterrent to effective leadership.

I think you can be in a place too long. I mean, you get to the point where [reference to a male superintendent whom she respects] said five years is the longest he's been –you lose ten percent a year—in five years that's fifty percent. You fired someone, you irritated someone, and I think with me it's my creative—my strength is my creation, I think. And after you've been in a place for a while I think you've done as many creative things as you can.

Two of the three superintendents interviewed had circumvented being place bound by commuting back to their families on the weekends. This is elaborated later in this chapter under the discussion of family.

#### The sports connection

Although not addressed in the original design of the research, there was a recurrent theme of sports experience that

surfaced in both the search consultant interviews and the interviews with the female superintendents. Referring to the present superintendent candidate pool, a search consultant observed, “ a lot of them are coaches, I mean, we still haven’t gotten away from that traditional perspective, I guess”. Another search consultant noted the importance of sports as he gave advice for interviewing, stating that “It’s probably important for a female to know about the football team and to have some interest because the stereotype is, well, you know—they should know about the football team.”

The female superintendents were also cognizant of the importance of sports. Beverly shared stories about hazing practices in athletics that continue just below the surface in many districts, and while not overtly condoned by her male colleagues, it is often tolerated. Sally expressed her displeasure with the emphasis on sports as part of the selection process:

I don’t know what kind of leadership quality they’re looking for when it’s someone who has all this athletic background. What does that have to do with leading the school district? It’s not business and it’s not instruction. So what is it? It’s football. And I don’t get that, because I don’t think that I’m really lacking any leadership qualities because I’m not a football person.

Women's career patterns

All three of the women indicated that they were in the field of education by accident rather than by design. Beverly had a successful interim career in business, and finally realized her life career was education. Sally began her career outside the field of education and the Jane kept taking interim offers to teach or administrate while focusing on a career in business and never did end up in business. Each woman seemed unaware that their "haphazard" career progress was more typical than atypical of women superintendents.

Beverly:

I started out believing that I would be a veterinarian. I taught after I got married and then I went into business for a while and then got back into education. Why? Because the superintendency looked like a challenge to me.

Jane:

I probably did not intend to become anything I became, anywhere along the steps of my career. So I don't know what that says, or even if it helps because that might be a little different than other people. I think I was, probably you know, more of a business type person.



Sally:

Maybe I had a non-traditional career path because I was 29 before I started teaching. I followed my husband into a school system and was actually working on another area for a Ph.D. and switched to administration because I could take classes and work full time.

The career experiences of the female superintendents were unplanned, but also filled with barriers to overcome.

### Sexism and Discrimination

One of the strongest recurrent themes that was found in the iterations of the interview data of the female superintendents was that of the sexism and discrimination they had to overcome in order to succeed. Jane spoke openly about her years of dealing with sexist bosses. She mentioned,

They hired another principal who was really a sexist guy. He tried to tell me that I reminded him of his first wife. (reflective pause) So finally I said, you know, in what way? You know, because I got him to change that perception.

In another instance she talked about dealing with sexual harassment was a way of life that she regarded as part of her survival.

I mean, things were very sexist. You were locked in closets and lived through sexual innuendos all the time and the

women were paid less than the men . . . even though you've got the same grade point . . . . I was young and attractive and all that kind of stuff at the time so I was subject to a lot of that. But I finished that year out.

Bonnie described the interview at which she received a job offer and her frustration about not being recognized as a person in her own right, "They [the board] announced that I was being offered the position, and when I accepted, the board all got up and went over and shook my husband's hand-- not mine!"

A search consultant was candid in his assessment of the present situation from his point of view:

I think a lot of boards, when they start looking for superintendents, you know, it's 'he this' and 'he that' and we keep reminding them that it's gotta be 'he or she' and they'll say, 'yeah, I forgot about that' And then when it comes right down to where you're sifting out candidates and sorting out candidates, the bulk of our finalists are male.

Sally shared a story that convinced her that she had been discriminated against in the hiring process, which she referred to as "smelling a rat".

I mean, I'm not stupid. Because I could sense in the interviews that they'd get all excited talking about me. They'd

just dialog with me and you could see them—you could see it sparking interest in like, this isn't like just the same old bull that we've heard before. And then some nice sweet guy who had been on the board called me, and that was probably inappropriate. I was aware that it was inappropriate, but I still thought it was nice. And then all of a sudden, "Oh, I'm so sorry." Obviously he thought it [the choice of superintendent] was going one way and it went another.

She learned later that the male administrators in that district had personally contacted school board members to protest the possible hiring of "that woman". Although aware of this fact, Sally chose not to report this to anyone.

### Family

There was a list of hardships faced by women who try to balance the responsibilities of caring for the family and career advancement. Some of the most poignant portions of the three female superintendents' interviews were the descriptions they shared of those times when they were involved in balancing career and family. From the researcher's field notes came the common observation that these women did not feel they were different than anyone else and retold their stories in a matter-of-fact manner.

Each superintendent spoke about caring for an elderly parent as part of her responsibility. Each had been divorced from a husband who was a classroom teacher in the early years of their lives. One had been divorced and then widowed and was married for a third time. One had divorced and later had a third child without being married, and successfully concealed that fact until after she had been hired as a principal. Two superintendents indicated drug abuse or “Vietnam syndrome” on the part of their first husbands as the reason for the breakup of their first marriages. One superintendent cited an unwillingness of her first husband to respect her need to complete her own goals in life, which included becoming a veterinarian.

Jane described her early years raising her family as a single parent.

“I was interim [principal] that year. Two secretaries and a Saturday shift. At 5:30 in the morning I was there. I would bring my little baby —go put him in day care and I’d bring him back at 9:00 at night and put him to bed and then I started my [home] work on my doctorate.”

Caretaking of family is in the forefront as this superintendent talks about deciding to change jobs:

So then my kids were gone, and my last child left—. He never—he hardly ever would be back and so it would be brief you know. So 9-11 comes and I realize I’ve got a child on the

East cost. I've got a child, you know, I mean, what am I doing? My mother had moved to a retirement community in Des Moines and I thought, why am I here?

That question brings the focus to another difficulty for the females interviewed: separation from family. Two superintendents commuted to their districts during the week and maintained their homes elsewhere. Jane commutes 2 hours to be with her aging mother on weekends and rents an apartment in the district where she resides and superintends during the week. Beverly resides in a rented apartment during the week and drives two hours to be with her husband on weekends. Sally resides in her district, which meant that her husband had to take an early retirement to join her there.

#### Consultants' outlook for increasing the number of female superintendents in Iowa

All three consultants indicated a reserved optimism about increased opportunities for women to become superintendents, with an indication that larger districts are easier for women to access than smaller districts. When this response was pursued for clarification, they alluded to the uncomfortable issue of bias. They estimated that a female is able to become a finalist about 20 to 25% of the time. They cited Illinois and

Wisconsin as having higher percentages of women in superintendent positions.

One consulting firm required the final ten candidates to make a video application so that the board has a chance to review all of the finalists and hear them speak. The search consultant whose firm has chosen this method of application believed that it expands the field of finalists and allows more candidates (including women) to be exposed to the board however, he concluded by musing, "I don't think there's any way you can prevent them from discriminating anyway if they choose to do so". Another consultant was optimistic:

I think there is still a bias in Iowa against females. But yet, I see the sharp female candidates, that once they're known and have an opportunity to interview--I think it's breaking the barrier to get to the board table to interview. When they interview, I think they're easy to sell to the board.

Beverly's story of the hiring her successor is sobering:

There's a bunch (of women who are certified to be superintendents). And a lot of them really want jobs. One of them applied for my job, really marvelous. A doctor [Ed.D. / Ph.D.] who would have taken my programs and run with them—and my board president put the kibosh on her. Two of my board members desperately wanted her.

The other two followed the board leader's—followed his lead, but they were really leaning this way, but he forced them, basically, and I could hear them laughing, you know, when he got his way and everybody finally give in. And they're hiring a man with no experience, has never worked with high school people. I've heard by the grapevine he has been fired from several jobs. And then two people have said, "If the board president wanted a stooge, they've found him". I don't know, hopefully he's going to be a good man. He seems like a nice person. But no experience, never worked with a budget before, and this woman who is fantastic. She—she doesn't actually have experience, but she's worked for the Department of Education for many, many years and is marvelous and they chose the incompetent man instead of the competent woman."

"Fit" is another evasive term that can invite bias. One consultant observed:

Fit is inhibiting sometimes. It means that the field may not be quite as open as it might because that tends to mean we're looking for what we've had before. The fit is something that is traditionally the community and so it may mean that boards do not take great risks a lot of times and may not hire

minorities or females because their concern about the community. ...It boils down to the board and the candidate seeing eye to eye.

So what makes a woman successful in becoming a superintendent in Iowa? The following composite portrait compiled was a result of the merging of the quantitative and qualitative findings of the study. The characteristics are similar to the results found in the Brunner (1996) study of 12 female superintendents from across the United States: These administrators retained their gender identity; set priorities to accommodate their work; simplified their focus and demonstrated persistence; were fearless risk-takers; guarded their private selves; used time efficiently; and used collaborative power.

### **Portrait of a Female Iowa Superintendent**

Note: This is a composite portrait based on the findings of this study. It is not meant to represent any specific individual and may not be generalizable to all female superintendents.

- She has an Educational Specialist, Doctor of Education or a Doctor of Philosophy Degree.
- She was in her middle forties when she accessed her first superintendency.



- A mentor has made a difference at least once during her career.
- She did not feel particularly supported by search consultants.
- She has approximately a 50% chance of being single.
- She may live in her district during the week and commute to home on the weekends.
- She makes less money than about half of her superintendent colleagues in Iowa.
- She serves a district of less than 3,000 students, more likely less than 1,000 students.
- She did not set out to be a superintendent; in fact she may not have even started her career in education.
- She has had or has family responsibilities—children or aging parents.
- She does not consider herself place bound and has worked in several districts during her career.
- She has probably left a district because of a difference in vision or because she was bored and needed a new challenge.
- She has personally encountered forms of bullying or harassment or both in her tenure in education.
- Her aptitude and/or strong math and business background runs contrary to the perceived stereotype that women are typically weak in managing school finance.

- She has been a principal or assistant principal, and established a reputation as a good disciplinarian.
- She is assertive, holds a vision of what she plans to accomplish in the district and is prepared to implement that vision.
- She has “grit”, is not afraid to stand up for what she believes, and has learned to survive difficult situations and does not take things personally. She thrives on challenges.
- She likes her work and takes pleasure in her accomplishments. She likes program and system improvement and feels driven to achieve them.
- She views herself as a tough instructional leader and is skilled with the curriculum
- She does not back down in the face of adversity, but prefers creative solutions in place of confrontation.
- She is aware of the existence of the old boy network and realizes she must co-exist with it.
- She has a sense of humor.
- She has good relationships with her peers.

## Chapter 5

### Summary of Results, Discussion, Conclusions, Implications for Practice, Recommendations for Future Research

*So many feisty potential presidents have passed our way:  
Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony, Shirley Chisholm,  
Barbara Jordan, Eleanor Roosevelt, and for my money,  
Abigail Adams. Even now. Beyond the women currently  
serving in high office, there are thousands of local women,  
names unfamiliar, ready to serve, filled with resources of  
courage and vision, eager to transform their communities and  
their country. Perhaps they will even transform the world.  
They're "nobody" now, without financial or political capital. We  
desperately need them to raise their hands and offer to serve,  
to endure the inevitable slings and arrows until they're no  
longer alone, to show future generations what it truly means  
to lead. (Wilson, 2004, p.32)*

### Summary of the Purpose, Methodology and Statement of the Research Question

The purpose of this study was to answer the question "What does it take for a female to become a superintendent in Iowa? The results of this investigation could provide valuable information in support of those

who are seeking this position, or are beginning a career track toward that position. Iowa currently lags behind the national percentage rate of women represented in the superintendency. Research supports the fact that women are as qualified and capable as men to be educational leaders; therefore information brought forth in this study could have a positive impact on educational leadership in Iowa by describing the barriers to women in the state and what attributes contributed to overcoming those barriers.

A mixed-methodology approach was employed for the purposes of the study. The primary research was quantitative in nature, which entailed a web-based survey of all female superintendents in Iowa along with an equal number of randomly selected male superintendents. The qualitative portion of the research enriched and expanded the quantitative data. Interviews with representatives of the 3 major superintendent search firms in Iowa and 3 current female superintendents were performed. Iterations of the qualitative data were analyzed along with field notes to discern recurring topics and common ideas. The framework for the interviews and the depiction of the findings used the underpinnings of the *testimonio* genre of qualitative research. The remainder of this chapter will focus on the question that guided the study: What does it take to become a female superintendent in Iowa?

Several recurring topics and ideas surfaced from combining the survey data, interviews and the field notes. These topics included demographics such as age and marital status, size of school district served and the salary earned. Another set of topics which recurred throughout the data was the support that the female superintendents experienced including networking, mentors and recruiters. The last major topic concerned barriers to females seeking career advancement and/or a superintendency. This is followed by a list of articulated or observed attributes which permitted females to access a superintendency. The search consultants and female superintendents discussed barriers and the attributes which allowed these superintendents to overcome those barriers. Barriers included such issues as bias, unplanned career pathways, and sports. Attributes included grit, leadership capacity, and connection with a search consultant. These topics will be considered in the order they were listed.

### Demographics

There were several significant differences between male and female superintendents in terms of demographics. For purposes of this discussion, demographics will include age at the time of the first superintendency, marital status, sizes of the school districts in which women served along with their salaries.

### Age at the time of the first superintendent position

As demonstrated in Hypotheses 1, there exists a significant difference between male and female superintendents ages at the point of their first superintendency. Data from this study show that women begin their superintendent careers on average over three years later than do men. The literature pointed out a number of reasons as to why this occurs. Those issues include caring for children, unplanned career pathways and difficult working conditions.

From a cultural standpoint, women continue to be the primary care givers and homemakers, which Lindsey (1997) calls the “motherhood mandate” (p. 197). Studies indicate that this situation has not significantly changed in the past 25 years (Families and Work Institute, 2004). As both the statistics from this study and from national research demonstrate, women very often wait until their children are raised to advance into administration, since administration typically requires a larger commitment of time than teaching.

The data from the quantitative research and earlier research about this topic in the educational field are at odds with the information given by the three female informants. Each of the female superintendents in this study managed an administrative level career and motherhood simultaneously. However each of these females had entered administration while their children were still at home (in one case with an

infant). This pattern of beginning administrative experience at an earlier age is consistent with more recent findings, in which it was observed that more women are balancing an administrative career and raising young children.

This choice did not preclude dealing with difficulty. Each of the women spoke of the dissonance they experienced between their personal and professional lives. Despite the fact that these women had been in administrative positions for a number of years, the ages at which they entered the superintendency were consistent with the portraits provided by research.

The findings of the literature confirmed that typically women do not enter the profession with clearly articulated career goals (Cassirer & Reskin, 2000; Shakeshaft, 1991; Young & McLeod, 2001). The female superintendents confirmed this in their own life experiences. Two of the three informants did not intend to have a career in education, but accepted their first teaching jobs as an interim position before continuing on with their intended profession. Further, the career path for a woman is not typically planned. From the stories shared by the female superintendents in this study, it was also possible to understand the sometimes-negative conditions under which they worked, which could also slow career progress.

### Marital status

Data indicated that a higher number of female respondents (52%) were divorced than were their male counterparts (8%). According to the Iowa Commission on the Status on Women Report (2000), between the ages of 30 to 54, 11% to 16% of the female population in Iowa becomes divorced. The percentage, then, of single women serving in the superintendency is greater than the general average for Iowa. Considering the difficult stories shared by the women superintendents, the stress of job and caring for family could account for the higher divorce rate of female superintendents which is consistent with the findings of the literature survey (Gupton & Appelt-Slick, 1998). Also consistent with recent research (Grogan & Brunner, 2005) was the fact that two of the three superintendents interviewed were involved in commuter relationships, one with her husband and one with caring for her mother on weekends. A new insight was uncovered with the mention of two of the superintendents talking about the responsibility of caring for elder parents. The stories evidenced how these women creatively dealt with the issue of caring for family by becoming weekend commuters.

### Size of School District

Information from the search consultants conflicted with the results of the survey. The search consultants indicated that women would have more opportunity to be hired in larger districts however the fact that there is only one



female in Iowa serving a district with a population of more than 3,000 students would seem to indicate that this opportunity is yet to be realized. According to the Iowa Department of Education, all of the “Urban Eight” (districts with more than one high school) are superintended by males. The search consultants indicated that gender bias is more prevalent in rural areas, yet women have not been able to penetrate the largest districts in the state.

Opportunities for superintending small districts may diminish. The current initiative from the Iowa Department of Education and the Governor to consolidate small schools may cause the percentage of women in superintendencies to decrease. If, as Alexander (2002) indicated, for the glass ceiling to be broken, larger numbers of females must gain access to larger and wealthier districts, Iowa will have a particularly large challenge.

### Salary

Women in this study were found to make less than their male counterparts. It is difficult to discern if this finding is related to gender because salaries vary from district to district, and the definition of salary is also relative to the district. Some districts consider the total benefit package when listing a salary, others do not. The greater question is why are there so few women serving in larger districts in Iowa where salaries are better.

According to the most recent statistics available from the Iowa Department of Education (2003-2004), the average salary for a superintendent in Iowa was \$90,613. Sixty-nine percent of the male superintendents responding to the

survey questionnaire reported earning over the state average and 40% of the female superintendents reported earning over the state average. Further study is needed to clarify the implications of these results.

### Support

Support is an attribute; lack of support is a barrier. Consistent with the literature (Glass, 2000; Lindsey, 1997; Young & McLeod, 2001), mentoring was indicated as a key factor in supporting careers in administration as well as connecting candidates to job openings. Results from both sets of interviews (search consultants and women superintendents) concurred with regard to the importance of support and encouragement for career advancement. Female superintendents specifically alluded to mentors during the progression of their careers. Mentors described in the interviews included major professors and administrator colleagues. This is consistent with the findings of the literature that indicated that mentors are especially critical for women to advance in the superintendency (Glass et al.(2000); Schmuck & Wyant, 1981).

According to interviews conducted with the search consultants and research represented in the survey of the literature, the consultant is the key to whether the candidate will be successful in securing the position. One female superintendent and each of the three search consultants mentioned the importance of recruiter support as key to accessing the position of superintendent. They choose which candidates from their pool will be presented to the board. They coach candidates to help them be more successful. They

“guide” the school board toward the sort of candidate who will be an effective leader for the district. Their support is important given the possibility that the board may have misgivings about whether or not the system and community are ready for a woman leader. In short, the support of the search consultant can make or break the success of any candidate. In the situation where the candidate is a woman, advocacy on the part of the search consultant could shatter the glass ceiling.

Of concern was the observation by the researcher that although the search consultants indicated that more women should be occupying the position of superintendent in Iowa, not one of the three was aware of the actual gender composition of the superintendent population. Even by probing during the interview the researcher was unable to ascertain any examples of proactive recruiting measures for increasing the number of women candidates.

## **Barriers**

### Bias

Despite legislation and the perception of an open playing field, the placement of candidates in superintendencies is sometimes undermined by gender discrimination. Because of the subtle bias that continues against women, women expect that they will have to outperform men.

Bias is difficult to determine. The female informants all shared stories about unreported violations of hazing of students, sexual harassment, and

discrimination. These stories were not limited to one gender. Women superintendents recounting stories of harassment experienced on the job gave a sobering view of what jobs can look like behind the scenes. One story recounted the mobbing techniques evident in the male aspirant's unsuccessful efforts to become a candidate in one search firm's candidate pool, and then being hired in his first candidacy when sponsored by another firm. This speaks to the fact that perhaps the good old boy network does not discriminate on the basis of gender alone.

The story of the actions of one district's administration campaigning against the only female finalist is discrimination and perhaps even a mobbing technique. To quote the female superintendent to whom this happened: I have really strong feelings about personnel and how people should be treated. And you know, this goes back to Autry (1991) and *Love and Profit*. If you don't have an organization with heart, then you don't have much.

The question that necessarily follows is, if administrators demonstrate sexist attitudes or discriminate in other ways against females, or for that matter, one another, then how does that attitude transfer to the treatment of students and climate of the schools they administer?

Tokenism occurs when the power structure places a representative from a marginalized group (in this case, women) in a visible place. As reflected in the literature, tokenism is discrimination in the extreme (Thomas, 1986). This may

have been the case when one of the female superintendents related that she had been a finalist for 8 superintendent openings in one semester. If we consider as valid the account from one search consultant, that search consultants actually lead a board to the choice of the candidate, it is not impossible to surmise the possibility that she served as a token in the first seven situations and was finally rewarded in the eighth. This is not meant to denigrate her own professional attributes, but instead to question why, on the eighth interview she was chosen. As described by the search consultants, the practice of presenting three male finalists and one female finalist to the school board brushes uncomfortably close to the possibility of tokenism. Further research is suggested to investigate tokenism in the superintendent hiring process.

### Sports

The review of the literature revealed that coaching experience remains a positive factor on an administrative resume and can be a determiner in accessing an administrative position. Women are more highly represented in elementary education than at the secondary level where there are more opportunities for coaching. Even though Iowa has a long history of opportunities for females to participate in athletics, the coaches remain primarily male. For example, in a random search of the membership list from the Iowa High School Girls Coaches association, 14 of the 54 members (22%) were female. It is logical to conclude that far fewer females coach high school boys' sports.

In addition, golf remains one of the main socialization and networking processes in administrators' organizations. For example, School Administrators of Iowa hold two major conferences a year and each provides a golfing opportunity as part of the schedule. A quick visit to the AASA website (5/21/05) with a prompt of "golf" yielded 42 matches including mention of a sponsorship of a golf tournament. According to the U.S. Census Bureau Statistical Abstract (2004-2005), the approximate ratio of male to female golfers is 4:1. This establishes golf as primarily a male sport, yet alternative activities that might be considered more "feminine" are not listed on most administrative conference agendas.

The female informants questioned the rationale behind connecting administrative capability and coaching/and or interest in sports events beyond the fact that it offers another learning opportunity for students.

## **Attributes**

### Grit

Female superintendents share qualities that are extraordinary under normal conditions: perseverance, intelligence, business acumen, and, in the words of one of the women, "grit". The stories told by the women relating how they "survived" working in administration, caring for children and pursuing doctoral degrees demanded fortitude and discipline. The researcher observed a sense of pride on the part of the female informants as they related stories of defending

academics and systemic changes that they believed would benefit students.

Each of the female superintendents indicated that they do not shrink from advocating for important systemic changes or holding people accountable. They also indicated that they had stood firm in defending and building board support for various educational initiatives that these superintendents believed to be important to student achievement or the welfare of the community.

### Networking

Networking is critical in the successful accessing of a superintendent position in Iowa. It opens doors, keeps members updated and connects people to positions. At a minimum, search consultants are aware of these networks, and at the maximum may be participating or even leading a network. In analyzing the interviews, the researcher noticed a somewhat different perception between the concept of network presented by the search consultants and those of the female superintendents. The search consultants viewed networking as a positive opportunity to access positions. The female superintendents, on the other hand, seemed to infer that this meant the “old boy” network, which they felt was exclusionary.

### Leadership

Survey responses indicated that both men and women superintendents place a high priority on leadership skills. With the No Child Left Behind legislation, requirements for increasing district accountability of student performance and the requirements for leadership in this is in demand.

The literature confirmed that women are primarily transformational leaders, a trait which is considered highly valuable for district leadership. Their awareness of curricular issues, their intrinsic satisfaction with accomplishment (Offerman & Bell, 1992), and their predisposition for “power with” (Brunner, 2000a) make females viable candidates for district leadership. These were characteristics either articulated or observed in the interviews with the female superintendents. The idea that men are better managers and have stronger financial acumen has little basis in research (Shakeshaft, 1991) and was refuted in the professional attributes of all three female superintendents.

Consistent with the literature, all three female superintendents interviewed moved their careers via line positions (Glass et al., 2000; Shakeshaft, 1991). Preparation for the superintendency via line positions may be more of a vestige of a rite of passage than an actual basis for effective leadership. Search consultants readily confirmed the value of female leadership for school districts. The stories of female informants in the study demonstrated their capability to lead as well as their courage and willingness to confront challenging situations.

## **Discussion**

These stories are not limited to women. Many administrative positions make unrealistic demands on the lives of superintendents. Leaders in the educational field have yet to redesign administrative positions so that people can meet their personal and professional responsibilities. This is not a gender-



specific issue. Men, likewise, pay dearly in terms of loss of family time because of the excessive demands of some administrative positions. A logical question generated from this study should be: how do we normalize the expectations for the positions leading up to superintendency and for the superintendency itself? If cultural expectations are greater for women than men in terms of family responsibilities, then the challenge also becomes greater for women who wish to move forward with their administrative careers.

The data collected in this study are incomplete. There is an important need to address the issue of how to open more opportunities for women. There is also a need to provide scaffolding and infrastructure within the system to support qualified women and who seek an Iowa superintendent position and enable them to access the superintendency because of the system instead of in spite of it.

### **Conclusions**

The shortage of women in the superintendency embraces a more complicated problem. The issues are intertwined with culturally embedded expectations and values. One of the major themes of the literature was the relationship of the powerful (white Protestant male superintendents) and the oppressed (women seeking leadership positions). The literature (Blount, 1998; Brunner, 2000a; Brunner, 2000b; Tallerico, 2000a) considered issues of the powerful and the oppressed, of change and the resistance to change, many of which center around the acculturated issues of gender. Articulating and

communicating these issues are important. Even legislation cannot subvert injustice when it is deeply ingrained in the culture of a society (Glass et al, 2001).

Women have become skilled and educated and prepared to take leadership roles. The resistance to women in leadership roles in our culture has become more invisible but no less strong. The education system should be a model to enlighten culture. Instead, education is cited as one of the slowest systems to move forward. At one point, the old-boy network was part of the overt culture of education. Indications from both of the groups interviewed were that it still impacts the choices made in education today, particularly in the area of leadership. There was consensus among the three female superintendents that the old boy network is more subtle than it once was, but still is exclusionary toward female administrators. This is confirmed on the national level by the AASA 2000 survey which found that 52.5% of the respondents believed that the old boy network is still functioning.

Search consultants are key players in the determination of who is chosen for the superintendent in a district. There is a need in Iowa to negotiate and leverage administrative leadership to be more open and supportive of women. Consultants are in the unique situation of being directly involved in all aspects of a superintendent choice and can therefore occupy a strategic position to help in this process. It was the observation of the researcher that search consultants do not view the disparity between the number of male and female superintendents as an important issue. Field notes indicated that the consultants were rather

vague in the awareness of how many women were in their candidate pools. They were not forthcoming with ideas of how they increase the number of women in their candidate pools. This type of non-support was confirmed in the literature (Chase & Bell, 1994).

Only one of the three firms used women search consultants. As cited in the literature, “school boards continue to depend on search consultants and afford them ample power and authority particularly in screening and winnowing parts of the selections process” (Tallerico, 2000a, p. 141). Before this can happen, the consultants must see this advocacy as a priority in their work.

Women shared stories about their solitude as they progressed along their career path. These women were bright, well prepared and motivated to lead. Their survival skills permitted them to persevere and succeed. They were guided by their vision for better schools, and were helped by mentors. Their stories, and the stories of others like them can be shared as a way of providing models and insight to others aspiring to the superintendency. A question remains, what happens to those bright and well-prepared candidates who have not had a mentor?

Survey responses indicated that both men and women superintendents place a high priority on leadership skills. With the No Child Left Behind legislation, requirements for increasing district accountability of student performance and the requirements for leadership in this area, women’s ways of leading and women’s skills, could be in greater demand. Women’s

transformational leadership style, their skill with curriculum and best practice could make them even more viable candidates in the superintendent market in the future. The stereotypic weakness that women are purported to have with finance and discipline has already been refuted by research (Shakeshaft, 1991) and practice. All three of the superintendents interviewed indicated their high level of competence with finance.

Cultural expectations, hegemonic practice, androcentric mind sets make the findings of the study the result and manifestation of the culture. Silence reinforces the status quo. Women fear speaking up because of retribution. The system provides venues for bias. For example, Tallerico (2000a) called the superintendent selection process fuzzy. The search consultants remarked that the key to being selected for a superintendent position is "fit". Fit is a "weasel word" that allows a school board to disallow, for example, African American candidates because they don't "fit" in a predominantly Caucasian community, or a woman because the community has been limited to patriarchal leadership. This is particularly of concern, when Fisher (1995) noted that in Iowa there was a strong preference for common ground criteria, reinforced on a national level by Tallerico (2000a) who referred to the superintendent selection process as "fuzzy" (p.106).

This study identified the school board president along with the search consultant as the gatekeepers to the superintendency. Further research is

needed to examine the actual selection procedures connected with the superintendency.

### **Implications for Practice**

One search consultant described how a potential candidate makes a connection with him. The potential candidate may ask the consultant to lunch and/or have a drink with him after a workshop or seminar. Women may feel less comfortable initiating this type of contact with male consultants than would men. Search consultants should be encouraged to hold workshops and seminars for women to deal with women's leadership issues. This would serve the purpose of connecting women and search consultants in a social and professional milieu that would be comfortable for both parties.

Administrative leadership programs at the university level could contribute to connecting students with search consultants. These programs could invite consultants as guest speakers, seminar leaders, or "consultants in residence" for their programs. This would provide authentic, up-to-date information for those who are seeking positions. It would facilitate potential superintendents to establish relationships with these key people with the purpose of connecting aspiring superintendents with support earlier in their careers. It would also serve to acquaint faculty in educational leadership with current needs and issues concerning the superintendency.

At the present time the School Administrators of Iowa organization provides mentors to new superintendents. As this program becomes better

established, a logical next step might be to assign mentors to aspiring superintendents, so that aspirants could receive the support and advice necessary to advance their careers. This support could come in the form of practical advice and encouragement as the potential aspirants make career choices and as they prepare for the interview process. This could broaden the networking possibilities for those who may be disenfranchised from that process.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

A system that challenges the extraordinary and promotes the ordinary will regress. The following recommendations for future research are based on the information from this study.

1. Major researchers in the area of female superintendents such as Blount (1998); Brunner (2000a); Grogan (1996); Tallerico (2000a) called for the need for women's stories to be told. While it is important to have statistical evidence to demonstrate that women earn less salary, begin superintendencies at older ages, or serve in small districts, the stories become one of the best means of communicating these situations. It connects reality and communicates the practical wisdom of success and what people did to survive difficult situations. Stories that are expounded in this manner lend humanity to details. More stories deserve to be recorded and shared.
2. The interviews with the search consultants revealed that it is the common practice of most firms to deal only with the school board

president. Many of the critical decisions in a superintendent search are made by two people: the search consultant and the school board president. Studying this process and those involved could bring useful information to the field.

3. Mentoring was cited by both the search consultants and the women superintendents as pivotal in advancing their careers. Further study on effective mentoring strategies is important. This information could be used to inform programs, curricula for administration preparation programs, and to encourage and sustain promising leaders.
4. Certification for the superintendency requires time and effort. In 2003-2004 school year, 209 women in Iowa were certified but were not serving as superintendents. Data on these individuals is not readily available from either the Iowa Department of Education or School Administrators of Iowa. There a need to study the reasons why these women are not superintendents. The reasons why they are not serving as superintendents could yield important information for the field.
5. Data from the stories of female superintendents indicated that all three had experienced what could be termed mobbing or bullying on the part of their superiors or their colleagues. Although literature is being published on the subject of student bullying and mobbing, little research is available on this subject in school administration. Further study in this area would be of value.

6. There was no mention of any organizational venue for reporting violations of rights without fear of jeopardizing a career. The March 2005 decision by the U.S. Supreme Court protecting an Alabama high school teacher from retaliation from the school district because he reported discriminatory violations on behalf of his girls' basketball team addresses the culture of silence. This issue needs to be studied with a goal of improving the avenues through which those whose rights are violated can report the situation and seek justice.

### **Strengths and Limitations in retrospect**

The strengths of this study included the following considerations. First, the researcher was well acquainted with the field being studied, having worked in education administration for several years and being certified as a superintendent. Although the researcher has not experienced the selection process as a candidate, the researcher has participated as an interview in the process. On sabbatical leave to work at the Iowa Department of Education, the researcher had numerous opportunities to meet and converse with superintendents across Iowa.

Further strengths of the study included the high response rate for both male and female superintendents on the web-based survey questionnaire. The contributions of the study to the field of education administration and particularly the position of superintendent are important. Those findings included the importance of the search consultant and the school board president as the



gatekeepers to the superintendency. Also important were the findings of the high rate of divorce among females that might reflect the stress connected with female moving their careers toward, and serving in, a superintendency. The sharing of stories and quotes in the words of the informants, using the *testimonio* genre to address the need for more women's stories to be told.

The limitations of this study included the potential bias on the part of the researcher because of her familiarity with the educational field and those working in it. This was offset by a careful selection of informants through the snowballing technique of establishing the professional credibility of potential informants. When 4 female informants were selected according to this technique, one informant was eliminated due to the personal acquaintance with the researcher. Again, the *testimonio* genre aided the researcher by allowing the presentation of the words of the informants without researcher comment.

Another limitation of the study was the researcher's inexperience with conducting the actual research. In retrospect a better and more succinct survey questionnaire could have been designed. Finally it was a constant challenge not to search out information that supported the researcher's personal bias, or those which seemed to be reinforced during the study, to maintain the dispassionate presentation of the data.

### **Summary**

In this study the research has attempted to capture the reality of the present situation for females and the superintendency in Iowa by addressing the

historical and cultural context of the field of education, the current and actual conditions of the superintendent selection process and the key gatekeepers in that process. The situation was given substance by capturing the words of participants (search consultants and representative female superintendents) by using the testimonio genre as part of the reporting mechanism. To contribute to the field, these findings along with advocacy for further research need to be shared with the field.

Skrla (2000b, p. 313) captured the purpose of this study with this quote:

I hope that the more informed constructions of female gender the superintendency and the interactions of female gender and the superintendency that have been communicated through this research will serve to prod the collective consciences of women and men in education and, thus, to continually remind all of us of the need to recognize, challenge, and change the androcentric constructions and discriminatory policies of our profession.

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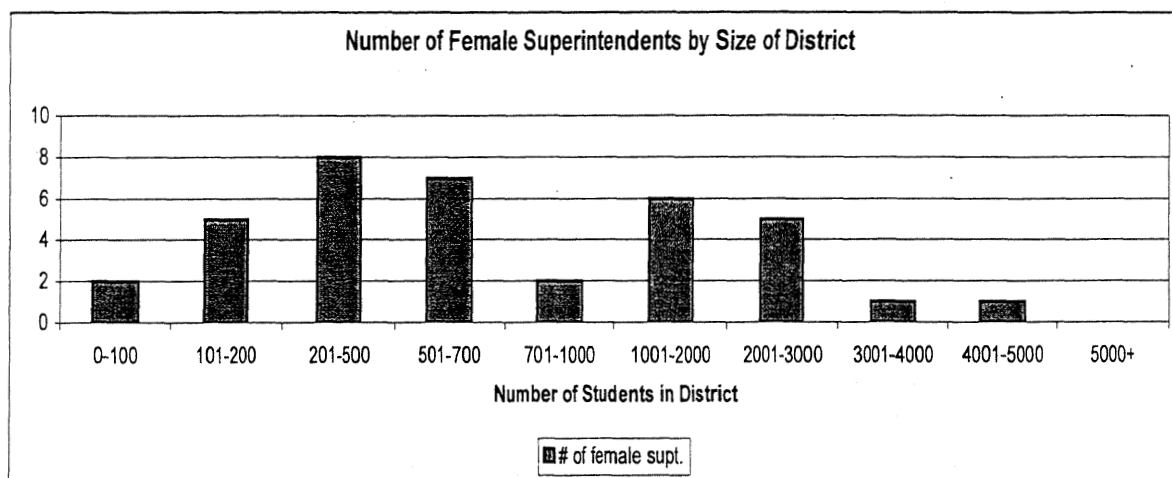
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## Appendix A

## NUMBER OF FEMALE SUPERINTENDENTS BY SIZE OF DISTRICT

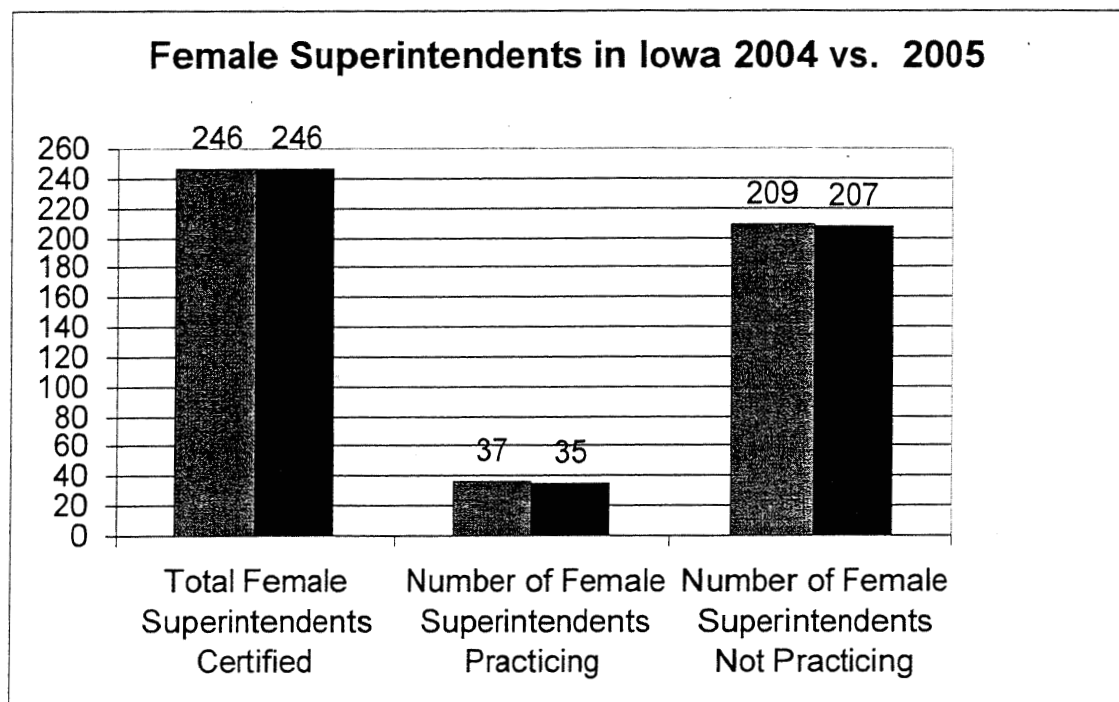


Source: Iowa Department of Education



## Appendix B

## FEMALE SUPERINTENDENTS IN IOWA 2004 VS. 2005

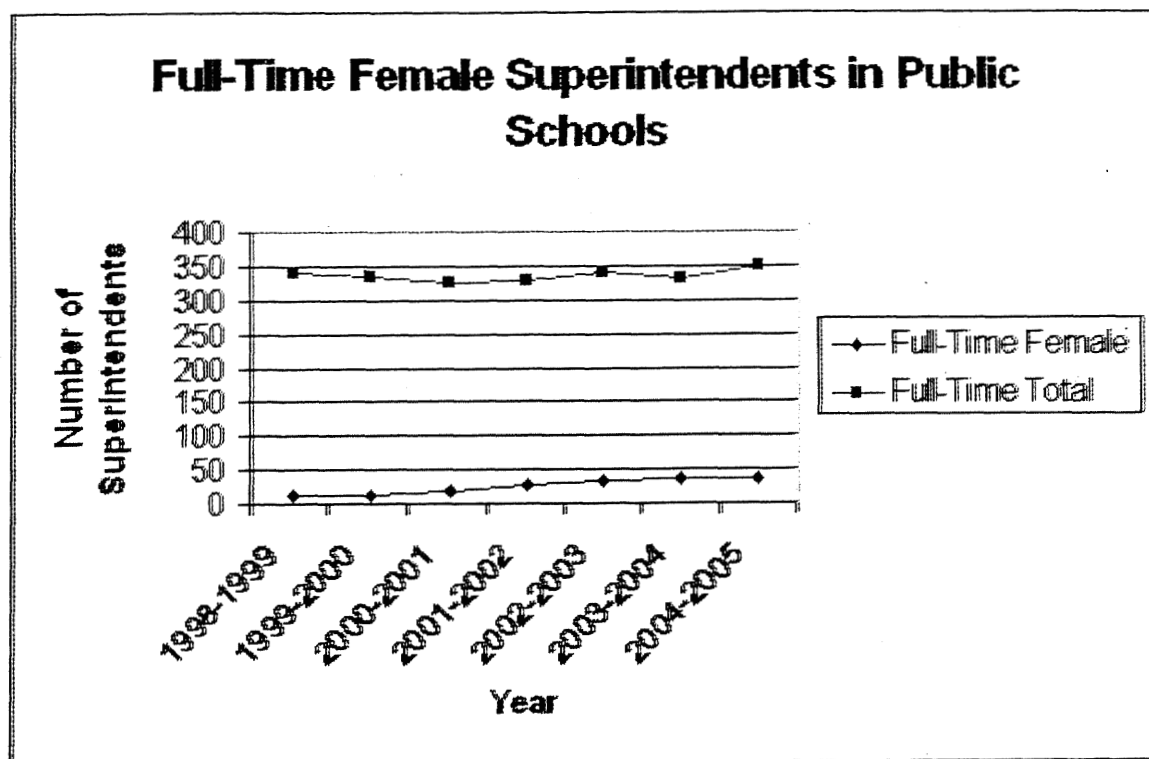


Female Superintendents in Iowa	2004	2005
Total Female Superintendents Certified	246	246
Number of Female Superintendents Practicing	37	35
Number of Female Superintendents Not Practicing	209	207

Source: Iowa Department of Education

## Appendix C

## FULL-TIME FEMALE SUPERINTENDENTS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS



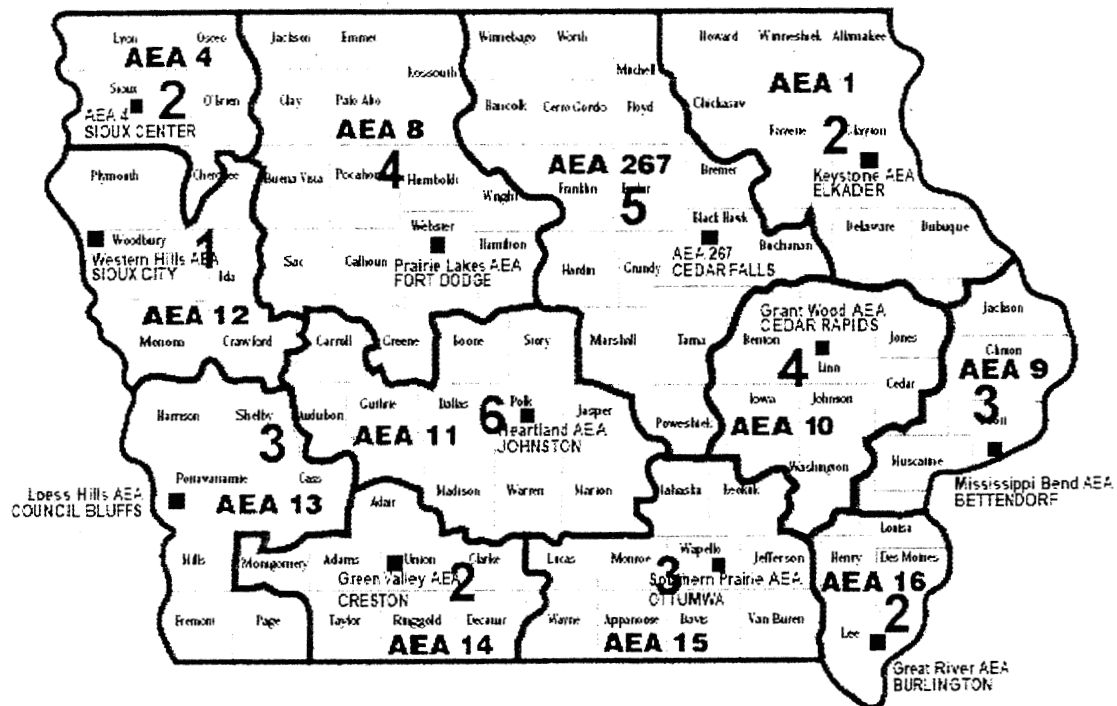
## Public Superintendents in Iowa

Year	1998-1999	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Full-Time Female	11	13	19	27	33	35	35
Full-Time Total	341	335	326	328	342	332	350

## Appendix D

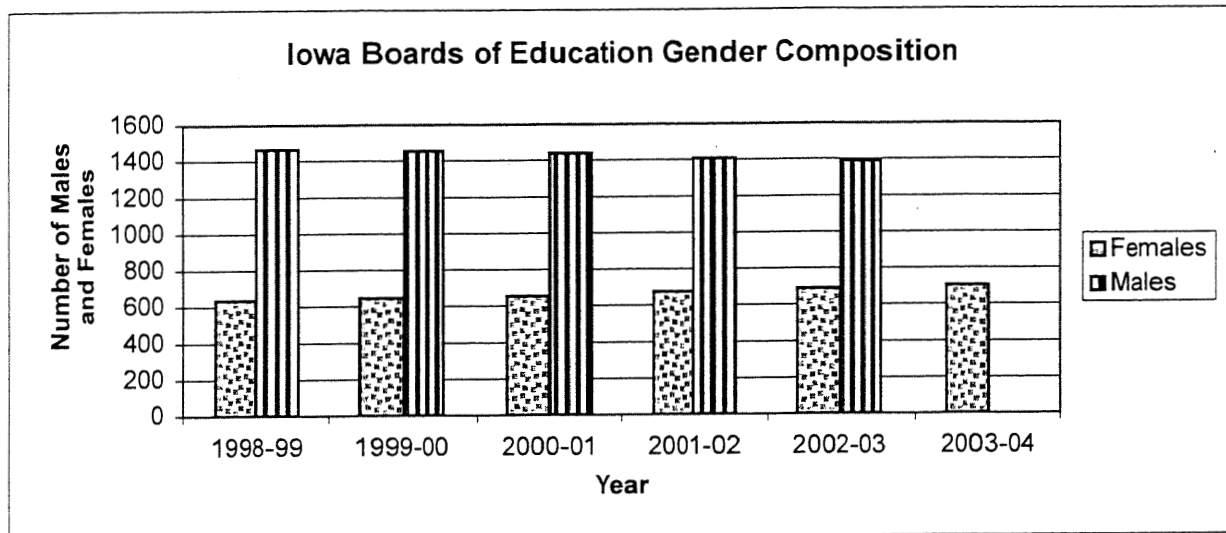
NUMBER OF FEMALE SUPERINTENDENTS DISAGGREGATED BY AEA  
DISTRICT

## Iowa Area Education Agencies



AEA	AEA	AEA	AEA	AEA	AEA	AEA	AEA	AEA	AEA	AEA	AEA
1	267	4	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
2	5	2	4	3	4	6	1	3	2	3	2

APPENDIX E  
IOWA BOARDS OF EDUCATION GENDER COMPOSITION



Year	Males	% of Total	Females	% of Total	Total
2003-04	1372	66.10%	703	33.90%	2075
2002-03	1391	66.80%	691	33.20%	2082
2001-02	1409	67.60%	674	32.40%	2083
2000-01	1440	68.70%	656	31.30%	2096
1999-00	1453	69.20%	648	30.80%	2101
1998-99	1464	69.70%	637	30.30%	2101

Year	Females	Males
1998-99	637	1464
1999-00	648	1453
2000-01	656	1440
2001-02	674	1409
2002-03	691	1391
2003-04	703	

SOURCE: IOWA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARDS

## Appendix F

## INDIANA SURVEY INSTRUMENT

## PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Directions: Please respond by placing a check mark next to the response which most closely represents your position. For open-ended items, please provide a concise statement. Thank you again for your participation!

1. The following is a list of barriers commonly identified by female administrators who have aspired to become superintendents. For each, indicate whether the barrier existed for you. Do this by placing a check mark on the appropriate line.

Perceived Barrier	Personal Experience		
	Definitely a barrier for me	Not a barrier for me	Unsure
A. Lack of family support	_____	_____	_____
B. Lack of employment opportunity	_____	_____	_____
C. Gender discrimination	_____	_____	_____
D. Lack of peer/collegial support	_____	_____	_____
E. Familial responsibilities	_____	_____	_____
F. Lack of self-confidence	_____	_____	_____
G. Racial/ethnic discrimination	_____	_____	_____
H. Personal lack of tenacity	_____	_____	_____
I. Other: _____	_____	_____	_____

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

2. This item contains the same possible barriers listed in the previous question. For those items you have identified as personal barriers, indicate the degree of difficulty you had in overcoming each barrier. In some instances, a barrier may present no difficulty (e.g., you were able to bypass the barrier); in other instances, the difficulty could be modest or severe. Place a check mark on the appropriate line to indicate your response. Additionally, provide a brief comment indicating the general effect of each barrier on you and/or your career. For example, a barrier may have caused you to redesign a goal or to become temporarily discouraged.

Perceived Barrier	Degree of Difficulty			Effects
	None	Modest	Severe	
A. Lack of family support	_____	_____	_____	_____
B. Lack of employment opportunity	_____	_____	_____	_____
C. Gender discrimination	_____	_____	_____	_____
D. Lack of peer/collegial support	_____	_____	_____	_____
E. Familial responsibilities	_____	_____	_____	_____
F. Lack of self-confidence	_____	_____	_____	_____
G. Racial/ethnic discrimination	_____	_____	_____	_____
H. Personal lack of tenacity	_____	_____	_____	_____
I. Other _____	_____	_____	_____	_____

3. The following is a list of personal characteristics which have been identified by female superintendents as positive career tactics. For each characteristic, indicate by placing a check mark on the appropriate line the perceived level of importance of this characteristic in your reaching the superintendency.

Personal Characteristic	Level of Importance			
	Not at all Important	Moderately Important	Extremely Important	Unsure
A. Philosophy of education	_____	_____	_____	_____
B. Being a woman	_____	_____	_____	_____
C. Human interaction skills	_____	_____	_____	_____
D. Planning skills	_____	_____	_____	_____
E. Organization skills	_____	_____	_____	_____
F. Philosophy of administration	_____	_____	_____	_____
G. Philosophical compatibility with the school board	_____	_____	_____	_____
H. Support of influential references	_____	_____	_____	_____
I. Quantity of teaching experience	_____	_____	_____	_____
J. Quality of teaching experience	_____	_____	_____	_____
K. Quantity of administrative experience	_____	_____	_____	_____
L. Quality of administrative experience	_____	_____	_____	_____

M. Being an effective manager (i.e., knowing how to do things)	_____	_____	_____	_____
N. Being an effective leader (i.e., knowing what to do)	_____	_____	_____	_____
O. Having an earned doctorate	_____	_____	_____	_____
P. Personal appearance	_____	_____	_____	_____
Q. Understanding politics	_____	_____	_____	_____
R. Ability to delegate	_____	_____	_____	_____
S. Self-confidence	_____	_____	_____	_____
T. Tenacity	_____	_____	_____	_____
U. Flexibility	_____	_____	_____	_____
V. Other: _____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



4. The following is a list of actions identified by female superintendents as influential in reaching the superintendency. For each item, place a check mark on the appropriate line to indicate the degree of influence personally experienced as you ascended to the superintendency. For example, an effective mentor is one who provides guidance and direction through example and encouragement. A sponsor is one who actively endorses the female in her position.

Action	Degree of Influence			
	No Influence	Moderate Influence	Strong Influence	Unsure
A. Identified and maintained mentor	_____	_____	_____	_____
B. Relied on flexible goals	_____	_____	_____	_____
C. Attended seminars in career planning	_____	_____	_____	_____
D. Identified and maintained sponsors	_____	_____	_____	_____
E. Consistently evaluated personal strengths and weaknesses	_____	_____	_____	_____
F. Became more visible professionally	_____	_____	_____	_____
G. Obtained support from family/friends	_____	_____	_____	_____
H. Developed/utilized "new girl" network	_____	_____	_____	_____
I. Gained leadership experience outside education	_____	_____	_____	_____
J. Other _____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

Personal Information (check appropriate responses for demographic profile)

5. Age: (optional)

- A. ☐ Under 40  
 B. ☐ 40-49  
 C. ☐ 50 and older

6. Ethnic group: (optional)

- A. ☐ Caucasian C. ☐ Chicano/Hispanic E. ☐ Asian  
 B. ☐ African/American D. ☐ American Indian F. ☐ Other

7. Marital status: (optional)

- A. ☐ Single C. ☐ Widowed E. ☐ Other  
 B. ☐ Married D. ☐ Divorced

Professional Information

8. Highest degree held:

- A. ☐ Ed. S.  
 B. ☐ Ed.D./Ph.D. C. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

9. Number of years of teaching experience prior to entering an administrative position: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Number of administrative positions experienced prior to entering an administrative position: \_\_\_\_\_

11. Your age at time of first superintendency: \_\_\_\_\_

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

12. Number of years in present position: \_\_\_\_\_ (Count the present year as a complete year)

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

13. Number of superintendency positions for which you applied before your first acquisition: \_\_\_\_\_  
Comment: \_\_\_\_\_
14. Have you spent your entire education career in one school district?  
A. \_\_\_\_\_yes  
B. \_\_\_\_\_no
15. Length of time seeking superintendency after earning certification:  
A. Less than one year \_\_\_\_\_  
B. One year \_\_\_\_\_  
C. Two years \_\_\_\_\_  
D. Three years \_\_\_\_\_  
E. Four years \_\_\_\_\_  
F. Five or more years \_\_\_\_\_
16. What is the total population of your school district?  
A. 200,000 and over \_\_\_\_\_  
B. 100,000 to 199,999 \_\_\_\_\_  
C. 50,000 to 99,999 \_\_\_\_\_  
D. 30,000 to 49,999 \_\_\_\_\_  
E. 10,000 to 29,999 \_\_\_\_\_  
F. 2,500 to 9,999 \_\_\_\_\_  
G. Fewer than 2,500 \_\_\_\_\_
17. Do you, or did you ever, have a mentor?  
A. \_\_\_\_\_yes  
B. \_\_\_\_\_no
18. Do you consider yourself a mentor?  
A. \_\_\_\_\_yes  
B. \_\_\_\_\_no

THANK YOU!

## Appendix G

## SURVEY INSTRUMENT

**Attributes and Constraints in Becoming an Iowa Superintendent**

Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) are mandatory.

**Section I: Professional Information**

1 Highest degree held:

- ☐ BA/BS
- ☐ Master's
- ☐ Education Specialist
- ☐ Doctorate

2 Number of years of teaching experience prior to entering an administrative position

3 Number of administrative positions experienced prior to entering a superintendency.

4 Your age at the time of your first superintendency

5 Number of years in present position. (Count 2003-2004 as your last completed year)

6 Number of superintendent positions for which you applied before your first acquisition.

7 Were you an internal or external candidate for your first position?

- ☐ Internal
- ☐ External

- 8 Have you spent your entire education career in one school district?

☐ YES ☐ NO

- 9 Length of time seeking superintendency after earning certification:

- ☐ Less than one year
- ☐ One year
- ☐ Two years
- ☐ Three years
- ☐ Four or more years

- 10 What is the total student population of your school district? (2003-2004 school year)

- ☐ 0-500
- ☐ 501-1000
- ☐ 1001-2000
- ☐ 2001-3000
- ☐ 3001-4000
- ☐ 4001-5000
- ☐ 5001 and over

- 11 Do you, or did you ever, have a mentor to help you to gain superintendency?

☐ YES ☐ NO

- 12 Do you consider yourself a mentor toward other aspiring superintendents?

☐ YES ☐ NO

- 13 What was your salary range in 2003-2004?

- ☐ Below \$60,000
- ☐ 60-69,999
- ☐ \$70-79,999
- ☐ \$80-99,999
- ☐ \$90-99,999
- ☐ \$100,000 and above

## Part II: Barriers for Superintendent Candidates

- 14 The following is a list of barriers commonly identified by public school administrators who have aspired to become superintendents. Rate each according to the following scale.

	5 Never a barrier	4 Hardly ever a barrier	3 Sometimes a barrier	2 Most of the time a barrier	1 Always a barrier	N/A
Lack of family support	5	4	3	2	1	
Lack of employment opportunity	5	4	3	2	1	
Gender discrimination	5	4	3	2	1	
Lack of peer/collegial support	5	4	3	2	1	
Family responsibilities	5	4	3	2	1	
Lack of self-confidence	5	4	3	2	1	
Racial/ethnic discrimination	5	4	3	2	1	
Personal lack of tenacity	5	4	3	2	1	
Cannot relocate to another area	5	4	3	2	1	

- 15 General response to any of these barriers. Have any of these had special significance in your career development? Please explain.

### Part III Personal /Professional Characteristics

- 16 The following list identifies characteristics that impact a superintendent's job performance. In the blank before each statement select your response from the following levels of importance.

	5 Very high impact	4 High impact	3 Moderate impact	2 Low impact	1 Very low impact
Philosophy of education	5	4	3	2	1
Being a male or being a female	5	4	3	2	1

Human interaction skills	5	4	3	2	1
Planning skills	5	4	3	2	1
Organization skills	5	4	3	2	1
Philosophy of administration	5	4	3	2	1
Philosophical compatibility with the school board	5	4	3	2	1
Support of influential references	5	4	3	2	1
Quantity of teaching experience	5	4	3	2	1
Quality of teaching experience	5	4	3	2	1
Quantity of administrative experience	5	4	3	2	1
Quality of administrative experience	5	4	3	2	1
Being an effective manager (i.e. knowing how to do things)	5	4	3	2	1
Being an effective leader (i.e. knowing what to do)	5	4	3	2	1
Having an earned doctorate	5	4	3	2	1
Personal appearance	5	4	3	2	1
Understanding politics	5	4	3	2	1
Ability to delegate	5	4	3	2	1
Self confidence	5	4	3	2	1
Perseverance	5	4	3	2	1
Flexibility	5	4	3	2	1
Maintaining a professional network	5	4	3	2	1
Support of recruiter or headhunter					





## Part V Influences/Experiences

- 19 The following is a list of actions, which can be influential in reaching the superintendency. For each item place a number on the appropriate line to indicate the degree of influence personally experienced as you ascended to the superintendency. For example, an effective mentor is one who provides guidance and directions through example and encouragement. A sponsor is one who actively endorses the person in their position.

5                      4                      3                      2                      1  
Very high influence   High influence   Moderate influence   Low influence   Very low influence

Identified and maintained a mentor

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

Relied on flexible goals

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

Attended seminars in career planning

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

Identified and maintained sponsors

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

Consistently evaluated personal strengths and weaknesses

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

Became more visible professionally

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

Obtained support from family and friends

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

Developed/utilized a professional network

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

Gained leadership experience outside education

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

Supported by recruiters/headhunters

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

Supported by others

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

Other

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

- 20 If you rated "other" above, please identify the action you would add.

### Personal Information

(mark appropriate responses for demographic profile)

21 Age:

- ☐ Under 40  
☐ 40-49  
☐ 50 and older

22 Status: (optional)

- ☐ Single  
☐ Married  
☐ Divorced  
☐ Widow/Widower  
☐ Remarried

23 Number of children

24 \*Gender:

- ☐ Male  
☐ Female

SUBMIT

## Appendix H

## COVER LETTER

On Jan 12, 2005, at 11:23 AM, Jill Olsen wrote:

Dear Iowa Superintendent or former Iowa Superintendent:

Please spare a few minutes from your busy schedule to contribute to the superintendency in Iowa.

In an effort to identify points of resistance and potential constraints for those aspiring to the superintendency in the state, I am conducting this study of 2003-2004 Iowa superintendents to partially fulfill the requirements of the Doctorate in Educational Leadership at Drake University.

The study includes responding to a survey, which should take about 15 minutes of your time. Responses will be tracked, however the answers will be held in strictest confidence. Please respond at your earliest convenience. All responses should be made within two weeks of today's date.

A description follows outlining the guidelines under which this research is being conducted. Please read this to make sure you are aware of your rights and privileges before going to the website to take the survey. Responding to the questionnaire implies your willingness to participate in the study.

You do not have to answer all questions in order to have your responses count, however the more information you can provide, the richer the study will be.

I urge you to participate. The few minutes you give could make a difference in the field.

Thank you for your time and for contributing to our profession.

Jill Olsen-Virlee  
Doctoral Student  
Drake University

After reading the description outlining your rights and privileges below with regard to this survey, please click on the start survey arrow to begin.

**If you experience problems with launching this survey, please copy the URL above, paste it into the address of your web browser and hit enter. If you encounter further technical problems with participating in this survey, please click on reply. Your email will go directly to George Held at Grant Wood AEA who is administering this survey.**

Information regarding your participation in this study:

1. This is a study that involves research with Iowa superintendents. The study is being completed under the direction of Professor Catherine Gillespie, Chair of the Department of Teaching and Learning at Drake University. If you have any questions regarding this study, please feel free to contact her by phone at 515 271-4602 or via e-mail at [Catherine.Gillespie@drake.edu](mailto:Catherine.Gillespie@drake.edu).
2. The purpose of the research is to contribute to the field of knowledge as to what skills/attributes are necessary to successfully access the superintendency.
3. All female superintendents practicing in Iowa have been invited to participate in this study. An equal number of randomly-selected male superintendents has also been asked to participate in this study.
4. Responses will be tracked for participation purposes, however results will be reported anonymously. All responses will be coded and held in strictest confidence. Results will be kept in a locked file cabinet on secured premises. Access and code numbers will be limited to the researcher.
5. Risks: Although the risks in this study are minimal, participants may experience some discomfort at recalling the application process for a superintendency. Although results will be published without names or identifying characteristics, the participant may feel concern about being associated with the results.
6. Benefits: This study should provide important information for aspiring superintendents and will contribute to the body of knowledge used to diminish discriminatory hiring practices in education administration.
7. Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. In addition, you are free to withdraw at any time.
8. Your participation in the survey will indicate that you have read and understood the conditions under which this study is taking place and that you are aware of your rights and privileges.

**Thank you for your willingness to contribute to this research.**

**Please click on the following URL:**

<http://www.zoomerang.com/survey.zqi?p=U23CTDA9TD6G>

## Appendix I

## CONSENT FORM

Information regarding your participation in this study:

1. This is a study that involves research with Iowa superintendents. The study is being completed under the direction of Professor Catherine Gillespie, Chair of the Department of Teaching and Learning at Drake University. If you have any questions regarding this study, please feel free to contact her by phone at 515 271-4602 or via e-mail at Catherine.Gillespie@drake.edu.
2. The purpose of the research is to contribute to the field of knowledge in how people access and what skills are necessary to become a superintendent in Iowa.
3. Females: All female superintendents practicing in Iowa have been invited to Participate in this study.  
Males: A random sample of male superintendents have been selected to participate in this study.
4. Responses will be tracked for participation purposes, however results will be reported anonymously. All responses will be held in strictest confidence. Results will be kept in a locked file cabinet on secured premises. Access will be limited to the researcher.
5. Risks: the risks in this study are minimal, Results will be published without names or identifying characteristics, however the participant may feel concern about being associated with the results.
6. Benefits: This study should provide important information for aspiring superintendents and will contribute to the body of knowledge used to diminish discriminatory hiring practices in education administration.
7. Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. In addition, you are free to withdraw at any time.
8. Your participation in the survey will indicate that you have read and understood the conditions under which this study is taking place and that you are aware of your rights and privileges.
9. Thank you for your willingness to contribute to this research.

I have read and understand my rights and risks in being involved as a participant in this study and give my consent to participate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I would like to receive a summary of the results of this study. \_\_\_\_Yes \_\_\_\_No

Address to which you would like the results sent:

**Permission to audio tape this interview**

I understand that the interview, which is about to take place, will be audiotaped, transcribed and analyzed for research purposes.

All tapes and information will be held in strictest confidence and results will be reported in the study in an anonymous manner so as to protect the identity of those people participating in the study.

I understand the above information and give my permission to audiotape this interview.

---

Name

---

Date

## Appendix J

## CONSULTANT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

**Qualitative interview questions for search consultants**

1. Would you begin by telling me about how you became involved in recruiting candidates for school boards?
2. How many employees do you have and what are their qualifications
3. Aside from the requirements set forth for certification, what does it take to become a superintendent in Iowa?
4. What is your role as a recruiter?
5. Approximately how many placements do you make per year? Do you work in other states?
6. How many firms currently place superintendents in districts?
7. How do you find candidates?
8. How did you arrive at the questions for the interview process?
9. What is the process for reviewing the written applications?
10. What is the breakdown in numbers between male and female candidates
11. Do you consider that it is more difficult for females to secure jobs in this state than males?
12. What should females expect to do that would help their chances.
13. Do you coach candidates? What types of things would you suggest?
14. Have you noticed differences in expectations for leadership between big districts vs. small districts? What are they?

APPENDIX K  
CONSTANT COMPARISON MATRIX: SEARCH CONSULTANTS

<b>Personal Attributes &amp; Barriers</b>	<b>Covered in survey Question(s)</b>	<b>Interview with recruiter R</b>	<b>Interview with recruiter S</b>	<b>Interview with recruiter T</b>
Family	II-A, E III-Z V-G			
Tenacity	II-H III-T			
Flexibility	III-U V-B			
Self confidence	II-F III-S			
Appearance	III-P			
People skills	III-C			
Philosophy of administration	III-F			
Self awareness	V-E			
Philosophy of education	III-A			
Lack of employment opportunities	II-B			
Cannot relocate	II-I			
Earned doctorate	III-O			
Self-awareness	V-E			
Support	I-15,16 II-D III-Z V-A, D, G,H,K			
Professional network	II-16 III-H V-H			
Quality of teaching experience	V-J			



<b>Personal Attributes &amp; Barriers</b>	<b>Covered in survey Question(s)</b>	<b>Interview with recruiter R</b>	<b>Interview with recruiter S</b>	<b>Interview with recruiter T</b>
Being an effective manager	III-M			
Being an effective leader	III-N			
Ability to Delegate	III-R			
Planning Skills	III-D			
Kept updated	V-C V-E			
High Professional profile	III-X V-F			
Organizational skills	III-E			
Leadership outside education	IV-I			
Quality of administrative experience	III-L			
Human interaction skills	III-C			
Length of time seeking a superintendency before securing 1 <sup>st</sup> position	I-13			
Other	III-V II-B			





APPENDIX L  
CONSTANT COMPARISON MATRIX; SUPERINTENDENTS

Demographics/Issue	Covered in survey Question(s)	SALLY	BEVERLY	JANE
Gender	I-1, II-C, III-B			
Age	I-2			
Marital Status	1-3			
# of children	1-4			
Age @ time of first superintendency	1-8			
Race, ethnicity	II-C			
Salary Range	I-17			
Quantity of teaching experience	I-6 III-1			
Degree held	I-5 III-1			
Quantity of administrative experience	I-7 III-K			
Number of years in present position	I-9			
Applied for how many superintendent positions	I-10			
Internal or external candidate	I-11			
Number of districts employed	I-12			



Demographics/Issue	Covered in survey Question(s)	SALLY	BEVERLY	JANE
Philosophy compatible w/ School Board	III-G			
Support of influential references	III-H V-D			
Understanding Politics	III-Q			
Support of recruiters	III-W V-J			
Other	III-W V-J			

